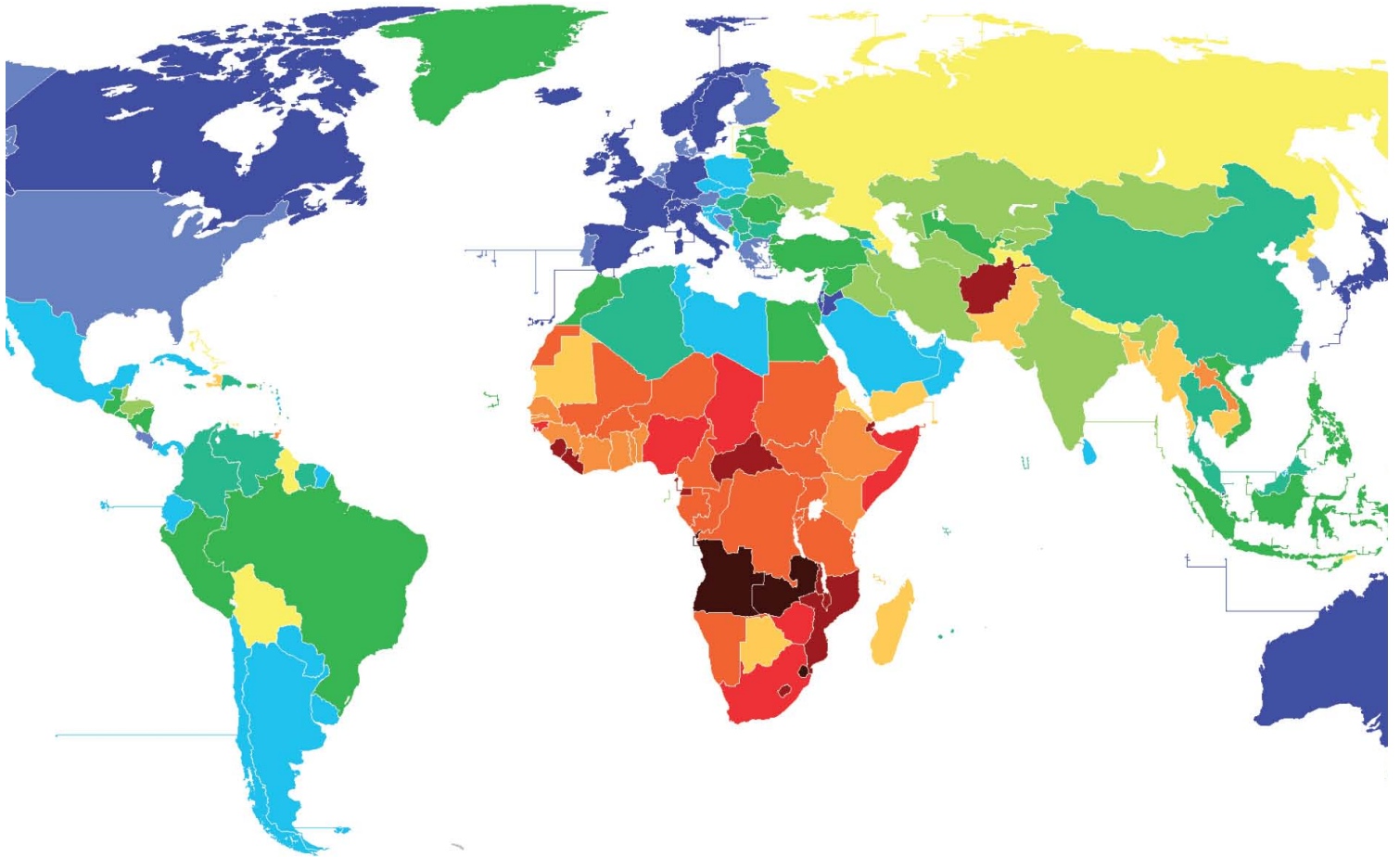


UNDER THE MACROSCOPE



**T3
W4**

**THE TURKS ARE FINALLY BOMBING THE
ISLAMIC STATE**

**HIGHLY TRAINED, MIDDLE-AGED AND OUT
OF WORK**

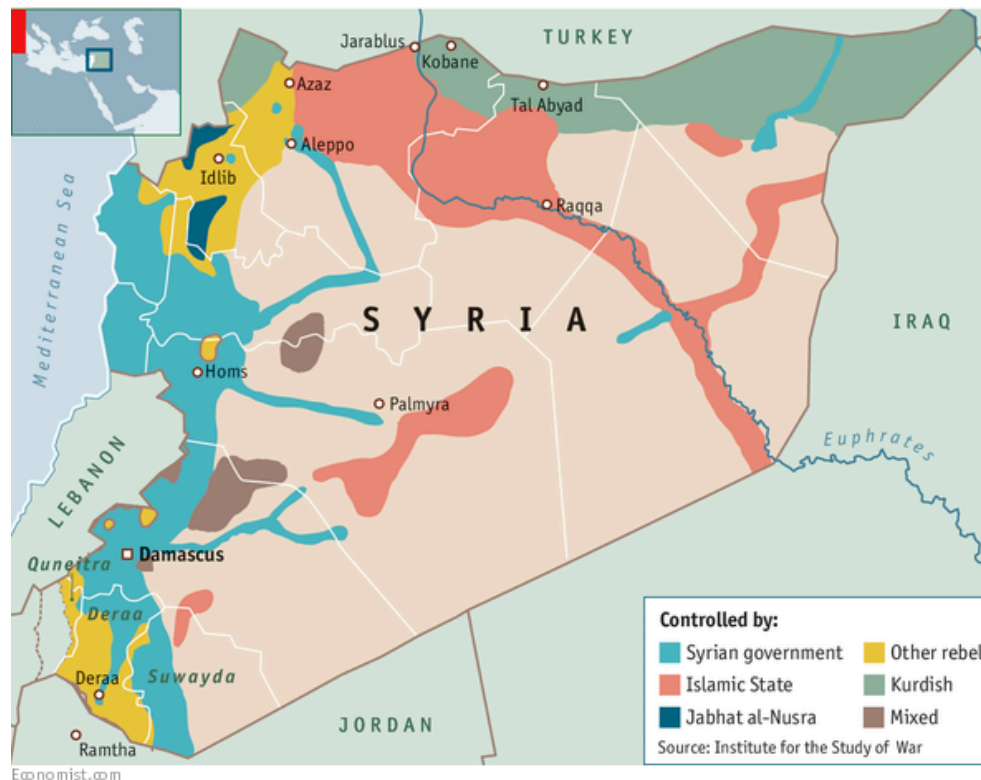
FOR QUERIES, PLEASE CONTACT US AT UNDERTHEMACROSCOPE@GMAIL.COM

RECÄS
We do news

Headlines

THE TURKS ARE FINALLY BOMBING THE ISLAMIC STATE

IS terror attacks and American support for the Kurds have persuaded Turkey it must fight the jihadists



After a year of hesitation, Turkey has come off the fence and joined the American-led coalition's military operations against the Islamic State (IS). On July 24th Turkish F-16s carried out airstrikes for the first time against IS jihadists inside Syria. The army said jets hit three targets in areas south of the border province of Kilis, where a Turkish soldier was killed on July 23rd by suspected IS militants firing from the Syrian side. Also on July 23rd, Turkey announced it will let coalition aircraft use the NATO airbase at Incirlik to hit IS targets. Turkey's long refusal to do so had led to tensions between Turkey and America, and prompted accusations that Turkey's Islamist government is colluding with the jihadists.

Turkey's ruling Justice and Development (AK) party has always denied such claims. On Friday Turkish police raided more than 100 properties in Istanbul and detained 252 people thought to be linked to IS. The crackdown was most likely prompted by

the July 20th suicide bomb attack in the border town of Suruc that killed at least 32 people. Most of the victims were university students planning to deliver volunteer aid to the nearby Syrian Kurdish town of Kobane, destroyed in an IS attack last year. The bomber was identified as Turkish national who had joined IS six months ago.

Western diplomats say Turkey had already agreed to let America use Incirlik for offensive operations before the blast. General John Allen, Barack Obama's special envoy to the region, has been working on a deal for the best part of a year. But the Turks had resisted, demanding in exchange that America declare a no-fly zone over Syria, help establish a safe haven on the Syrian side of the border and give as much military priority to removing Bashar Assad from power as to combating IS. A safe haven would help prevent further refugees from coming to Turkey, already home to nearly two million Syrians displaced by the conflict.

Turkey also frets about blowback inside its borders, where IS is believed to have established a sizeable network and recruited hundreds of fighters. But Mr Obama fears a safe haven would lead to America having to commit ground forces. Western officials say their priority remains destroying IS, not toppling Mr Assad. So what prompted Turkey's shift?

Many believe the move was made to salvage ties with America. Mr Obama has publicly rebuked Turkey for not doing enough to stop the flow of foreign fighters and weapons to Syria. But the immediate cause for the reversal appears to be Turkish fears that its reluctance was deepening America's friendship with the Syrian Kurds. The People's Defence Units (YPG), a Syrian Kurdish militia, has become America's top partner against IS inside Syria. This worries Turkey because the YPG is closely linked to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), the rebel group that has been fighting on and off for decades to establish Kurdish self-rule in Turkey. The YPG's steady expansion along the border stokes Turkish fears of a new Kurdish entity that would become a magnet for millions of Turkish Kurds who support the PKK.

Last month, with the help of American air power, the YPG wrested control of Tel Abyad, a town on Syria's border with Turkey that had served as a supply line to the IS capital of Raqqa. This allowed the Kurds to link Kobane to the areas they control further east, all the way to the Iraqi border. Turkey fears that their next move will be to punch westwards through IS-controlled territory to link up with Afrin, the third Kurdish-administered canton. America may have given assurances that this will not happen, to help convince Turkey to join the fight.

Turkey's change of mind will have a major impact on the intensity of the air campaign against IS. Incirlik is only a few minutes' flying time from Syria, compared with the long haul to IS strongholds from bases in Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait and the Gulf. That means the sortie rate can rise: pilot fatigue will be lower, and fewer missions will require aerial refuelling. It also means that strikes called in by surveillance drones will leave mobile targets much less time to disperse or hide.

However, American claims that the decision is a "game-changer" may prove optimistic. Strategists warn that air strikes may degrade IS, but without competent forces on the ground, they will not destroy it. Some in Washington are sympathetic to President Erdogan's goal of a safe haven, but Mr Obama has shown no sign of budging.

In Turkey, sentiment over the new policy is mixed. "The AK is finally cleaning up the mess it created itself," says Kadri Gurel, a prominent columnist who was sacked this week by *Milliyet*, a newspaper, for his critical tweets about the government. But on Twitter, Turks with Islamist sympathies complained that their government had "betrayed the Ummah [the Islamic community]", and similar sentiments. Meanwhile, after a two-year ceasefire, the PKK has resumed its attacks inside Turkey, killing four policemen over the past two days. This will complicate American support for the YPG. The move was "wrong and stupid and is bound to rub off on the YPG," said a senior western official. The PKK will remain on America's terror list "for many years to come."

By The Economist

Environment

WHALE OF A FIND IN SINGAPORE

Rare sight of whale's carcass has caused a stir among residents and researchers here.



An MPA diver preparing to go into the water to tie a rope around the whale's body before it is secured to the buoy tender vessel Panduan and towed across the West Johor Strait to Tuas Marine Transfer Station

An adult female sperm whale, 10.6m long and weighing between 8 and 10 tonnes, was found in Singapore waters for the first time.

Sperm whales are the largest toothed whales and largest carnivorous animals on earth. Adult males can grow longer than 20m and weigh over 50 tonnes. The species is regarded by the International Union for Conservation of Nature as vulnerable to extinction.

The mammal was found floating off Jurong Island last Friday. Mr Jailani Salleh, a worker in the oil industry, posted a video of his sighting on Facebook group Nostalgic Singapore on Friday morning.

Singapore got its first and only complete large whale carcass in 1892. The 13m-long baleen whale was found beached in southern Malacca that year and its skeleton was subsequently displayed in the old National Museum from 1907 to 1974.

It was then presented as a gift to Malaysia's Muzium Negara and is now housed in the Maritime Museum on Labuan, off Sabah.

So the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum was very keen to recover the recent find for its collection.

The carcass had a huge gash on its posterior half. After museum staff inspected it, divers from the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore secured it with ropes to the buoy tender vessel Panduan, which had to move slowly across the West Johor Strait to prevent disintegration of the specimen in the rough waters.

When the carcass reached the Tuas Marine Transfer Station at about 9pm, the museum's mammals and birds curator, Mr Marcus Chua, and scientific officer Foo Maosheng, started work on collecting tissue samples while it was still "fresh" .

Over the next few weeks, museum staff will collect tissues, examine gut contents and recover the skeleton for research and educational purposes. The skeleton of the "Singapore Whale" will eventually go on show at the museum.

By The Straits Times

local

HIGHLY TRAINED, MIDDLE-AGED AND OUT OF WORK

Retrenched older PMETs are struggling to find jobs at similar levels



Office workers walk through the central business district during lunch break.

Dressed in an unassuming polo T-shirt and jeans, it is hard to tell that Mr Desmond Tan was once the head of Asia sales at one of the largest European banks.

Forced to quit shortly after the 2008 financial crisis, he was later turned away from jobs by bank after bank, some even saying he was "over-qualified" for the positions they were offering, given his over two decades of experience.

The 55-year-old, who used to earn more than \$25,000 a month, now has to settle for commissions of about \$3,000 from his current job as a property agent.

"I used to deal with money that numbered in the millions," Mr Tan said. But now his fees come only in the hundreds.

Mr Tan is not alone in joining the group of highly qualified professionals who have spent years climbing their way up to the top, only to be retrenched.

And when they try to search for a new or similar job, they realise that the fall from the top was a hard one.

Many such job seekers say that the search for a new job takes longer, and sometimes results in them taking up a role outside of their area of expertise and far below their previous pay.

Fifty-seven per cent of Singaporeans and permanent residents who lose their jobs are able to find a job within six months, according to the Manpower Ministry. For professionals, managers, executives and technicians (PMETs), however, the proportion was below average at 49 per cent for the same time period.

Workers aged 40 and above also fared worse than younger groups, with a re-entry rate of 53 per cent.

Here, however, it is unclear if those who managed to find jobs actually reached a level similar to that which they used to hold.

The Central Provident Fund Board, which provides data for re-employment rates, said it does not track the difference in wages for the new jobs.

But it seems hard for out-of-work PMETs who held senior management positions to find new jobs that are commensurate with their skill levels and pay expectations.

"A rough 40 per cent are fortunate enough to get back into a job that is similar in grade and salary, 60 per cent have to reinvent themselves or do something totally different," noted Mr Paul Heng, managing director of NeXT Career Consulting Group. Human resource experts and economists said factors such as economic restructuring and rising competition could explain why it is so difficult for older PMETs to regain their positions at the top of the company food chain.

"Some jobs aren't available in Singapore any longer because regional positions may have moved out or are replaced by enlarged roles of other people," said Singapore Human Resources Institute president Erman Tan.

This hits long-serving PMETs hard because many of these workers have had to pick up employer-specific administrative and managerial skills. These are not easily transferrable to other companies or industries, said Nanyang Technological University assistant professor Walter Theseira.

Experts also note that there is generally a rigid pyramid-like structure in many industries. With a rising number of better-qualified people in the workforce, there is more competition for limited senior positions at the top of the pyramid of jobs.

"You're facing competition not only from people who are already in that position, but also from people who are striving to reach that position," said Quantum Leap Career Consultancy managing director Alvin Ang.

And once someone at the top leaves a post, whether voluntarily or not, it will be hard for that person to find another similar position.

Some older PMETs continue to try to search and wait for the right opportunity. Sometimes, these openings turn up and the worker can resume his former career path.

Often, the only route available for such workers is to switch careers by picking up new skills in an industry with prospects.

Observers said older PMETs can help themselves by continuing to network and update their skills.

"(They must) build value for themselves so that they add value wherever they go and can then command the salaries they want," said labour MP Patrick Tay, who heads the National Trades Union Congress' PME Unit.

Those in urgent need of a job may have to lower their expectations.

Nee Soon GRC MP Lee Bee Wah said that she helps match employers with job seekers among her residents, and "normally those who are flexible in the distance from workplace, salary and working hours get jobs easily".

The Government is moving on several fronts to tackle this.

One is SkillsFuture, a national initiative which aims to equip workers with skills that future industries require. This will make it easier for workers to make the switch easily to new growth industries.

But this is a move that will take time to root.

The other, more immediate, solution is a new wage subsidy scheme that will support wages of older professionals, managers and executives by up to 40 per cent, capped at \$7,000 a month for a year.

Manpower Minister Lim Swee Say announced this earlier this month and said: "After the one year, hopefully most of them will find that the adaptation is an effective one."

Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy economist Hui Weng Tat said the programme could help by reducing the risk on the part of the employer and increasing the incentive for workers to take up the job.

For now at least, such news is cold comfort for workers like Mr Long Khin Keong.

A former general manager in the oil and gas industry, he used to draw a salary of about \$15,000 a month. These days, Mr Long, 58, takes eight months to earn that much as a taxi driver.

He got behind the wheel about a year ago after struggling for six years to find a suitable job.

"Hopefully somebody 'up there' reads this and improves the predicament of many like myself.

"I'm not asking to become a GM again, I just want to be somewhere I can contribute with my experience," he said.

By The Straits Times

Science & Tech

BORN THIS WAY? SOCIETY, SEXUALITY AND THE SEARCH FOR THE 'GAY GENE'

Are our sexual desires derived from our genes? Or can we make active choices about who we are sexually attracted to?

Over the past decade the idea that we are “born this way” — or that our sexuality is genetic — has become increasingly important. The mantra has become a political strategy, in particular for gay and lesbian communities, who see it as a way to protect themselves from discrimination. The movement has spawned blogs where people show pictures of their childhood to highlight the innate nature of their sexuality, and attacks on those who have questioned the theory.

But do the politics match the science?

People have been searching for biological explanations for sexual desires for centuries — primarily as a way to try and find a “cure” for “perverted desires”. In the most horrible of examples, the Nazi regime in Germany invested significant resources in attempts to find the reasons for homosexuality in attempt to cure it.

In recent decades the search for a “gay gene” has intensified. In 1991, for example, Simon LeVay released a study that suggested small differences in the size of certain cells in the brain could influence sexual orientation in men. In 1993 this research turned to genetics, when Dean Hamer claimed that markers on the X chromosome could influence the development of same-sex orientation in men. The issue hit the headlines again last year after the release of a study from Dr. Alan Sanders. Sanders studied the genes on 409 pairs of gay brothers, finding they may share genetic markers on the X chromosome and chromosome 8.

With each study, confidence in the gay community about a genetic link to our sexuality has become stronger. It has become generally assumed that a gay gene must exist. But take look at the actual science, and the history of sexuality, and you will find serious problems with the theory.

First, all of the recent studies searching for a gay gene have significant issues. For example, as Samantha Allen notes, biologist Anne Fausto-Sterling “tore LeVay’s original study to shreds, noting that there is substantial overlap between the cell

cluster size ranges of gay men and straight men in his sample.” There has been significant criticism in scientific fields over Sanders’ study as well, with many scientists arguing the results were not “statistically significant” (while that may sound like a mild criticism that’s a big deal in the science community). While news headlines promote each study as a “confirmation of the gay gene”, the reality is very different.

These issues highlight a fundamental problem that goes well beyond the peculiarities of these particular studies. Scientists are asking whether homosexuality is natural when we can’t even agree exactly what homosexuality is. Homosexuality, as with all sexualities, is a social construction.

What does that mean? In his book *The History of Sexuality* Michel Foucault charted a major shift in our construction of sexual desires over the past few centuries. There are two important changes. First, we have developed the idea that our sexual desires reveal a fundamental truth about who we are, and second we have created a conviction that we have an obligation to seek out that truth and express it. As Jesi Egan argues, “within this framework, sex isn’t just something you do. Instead, the kind of sex you have (or want to have) becomes a symptom of something else: your sexuality.”

Instead of just being a thing we do, therefore, sex has become an essential part of our identity. Hence the creation of the terms “homosexuality” and “heterosexuality” — terms which were never related to physical truths, but instead to social truths. This picture of sexuality is where we stand today: our sexual desires help construct our social identity, one which we believe tells a fundamental truth about who we are.

To understand this a bit more it is worth looking at past expressions of sexual desire.

Ancient Greece is usually noted as one of the most open societies when it came to male homosexual acts, which were seen by some as “the most praise-worthy, substantive and Godly forms of love.” Greece’s ancient culture is known to include a form of relationship called pederasty, a socially acknowledged and acceptable form of erotic love between an adult male and a younger man.

Or what about the Sambia in Papua New Guinea? Believing it possesses “masculine spirit”, boys in the Sambia are required to ingest semen as part of a ritual to allow them to mature to men. All boys go through a period in their life where they are

required to perform regular oral sex on older members of society. When they become men themselves they then repay the favour by offering their semen to boys wishing to become men.

These sorts of examples are not just related to homosexual acts either. Look at the different perceptions of female beauty throughout the ages. In the Renaissance period for example more voluptuous women who had large breasts and hips were portrayed as beautiful, whereas in Victorian England women's beauty was based around an hourglass figure created by corsets designed to cinch a waste as tightly as possible. These are both very different to mainstream perceptions of female beauty today, which are (controversially) based heavily on an ideal of model-type thinness.

This is the major problem that advocates of a gay gene face. Our sexual desires and ideals change based on our society at any given time. Do proponents of the gay gene believe that those in Ancient Greece or in the Sambia had/have a greater prevalence of a gay gene than we do today? Do our perceptions of female beauty change over the times because of shifts in the genes of straight men?

Of course this still doesn't answer the question of where our sexuality comes from. When faced with this criticism, proponents of the gay gene ask the question, "why would people be choose to be gay in a world where homosexuality is so persecuted?" We live in a society where non-heterosexual sex is still highly discriminated against, so why are there homosexuals in this world?

The answer is complex, and we don't really know all the factors involved. But look at the current research and you can see that social conditions still play a major role.

For example, whilst almost all of the focus of research into the gay gene has focused on gay men, research into female sexual desires has continued as well. In 2006 for example, Linda Garnets and Anne Peplau presented research they described as a "paradigm shift" into female sexuality. Their research found that women's sexual orientation is potentially fluid, shaped by life experiences and can change over the course of a life span. Of particular importance they found that female sexual orientation is "shaped by such social and cultural factors as women's education, social status and power, economic opportunities, and attitudes about women's roles."

Sexual desire is due to a range of different factors — including biology, a person's upbringing and education and social constructions at the time. Whilst female sexual

“fluidity”, for example, can be linked to social acceptance of that idea (based on male desires) that one social construction does not tell the story for everyone. Our sexuality is due to a range of factors we not fully understand.

Where does this leave us? Clearly we do not know how sexuality is created and why some people end up with different sexual desires than others. But if we look at our history it is clear that it is not due to some inherent genetic marker. Jenny Graves at La Trobe University in Australia suggests that what is likely is that both men and women will inherit genetic variants leading to them being “somewhere between very male-loving and very female-loving”. Or, as I would describe it, we have human-loving genes. Homosexuality therefore is not due to genes, but develops, as Julie Bindel says, due to “a mix of opportunity, luck, chance, and, quite frankly, bravery.”

That doesn’t mean that gays and lesbians are less deserving of political rights. Queer relationships should be embraced, not because homosexuality is genetic, but simply because there is nothing wrong with them. While gay gene arguments may seem like a way to push the rights agenda forward it can actually have the opposite effect — limiting the debate solely to those traits and behaviours seen as genetic. There is no genetic evidence for much of our behaviour. Does that mean, even when we are not creating harm, we have less of a right to engage in those acts than others?

On the other side of the coin, does it signal support for those who conduct ‘aversion therapy’ in order to cure people of their homosexuality? Those practices are wrong, particularly when used against those who are under the age of 18, not because they don’t work (which they normally don’t), but because they perpetuate a homophobic ideology that causes significant harm to queer people. We’d be much better off fighting that ideology than trying to use “born this way” arguments to convince people to stop these practices.

When it comes to our sexuality it is very unlikely we are “born this way”. While biology obviously has a role it is our social conditioning that seems to be largely behind our sexual desires. And just like any other social conditioning, this is one that, if we really want to, we can break. If that is what we want to do, why not?

By The Guardian

Travel

AMAZING WATER FESTIVALS WORTH SPLASHING OUT FOR

Looking for a truly immersive travel experience? Then add these water-fuelled festivals to your itinerary, pack a sense of humour – plus your favourite swimsuit – and prepare to get wet.



Held in many countries all over the world, water festivals offer a fantastic insight into local life and a wildly one-of-a-kind travel experience that is not to be missed. But be warned: make sure to invest in reliable [waterproof cases](#) for your camera and handphone, or opt for something like the waterproof Sony Xperia

Z3+ to cover all your electronic bases at once.

Now that you're ready to get soaked with a smile, let the journey begin...

Songkran water festival: Thailand

Intended as a cleansing ritual to prepare for the year ahead, this religious holiday marks the end of Thailand's hot dry season and usually takes place in April. Join locals across the country as they arm themselves with buckets, hoses and water pistols and take to the splash-happy streets.

Songkran lasts for three days, so if you plan to experience the mayhem from a few destinations, spend your transit time editing and uploading snaps from your smartphone to ensure your friends back home don't miss a second of your adventure.

Dai water-splashing festival: Jinghong, China

Over in China, the summer months culminate in New Year's celebrations for the Dai ethnic minority, which makes up one-third of the population in the remote southwest province of Yunnan.

Proceedings might start out politely – people wearing their best clothes and visiting temples to wash statues of Buddha – but the event soon reaches a frenetic finale in the capital of Jinghong. This tropical town turns into a water world as full-to-the-brim buckets are sloshed onto unsuspecting people from cars, houses and shops.

Road-weary backpackers should expect to see “reviving” water balloons the minute they arrive, as it’s all part of the welcome party. But wherever you are travelling from, prepare for a long journey: Jinghong is a 34-hour train ride, followed by another seven hours on a bus, from Beijing. The best survival strategy is to ensure your smartphone is loaded with movies and music, armed with noise-cancelling technology — so those sweaty trips are guaranteed to be far more enjoyable.

Holi festival: India

Observed by Hindus across the country and around the world, Holi is one of India’s most beloved festivals. From tiny villages to skyscraper-studded megalopolises, the streets play host to an attractive rainbow-hued riot as people come together to hurl coloured powder and water at each other.

There are a number of stories behind this Festival of Colours, and many say it celebrates the immortal love of the divine couple Radha and Krishna. That might explain why the normally two-day event lasts for 16 days in Vrindavan and Mathura, the cities where Lord Krishna grew up. If you find yourself caught up in the ceaseless celebrations, the Sony Xperia Z3+ has a two-day battery life and a capless USB port for easy connection and charging, so you’ll always be ready to capture the action.

La Tomatina: Bunol, Spain

Ever felt like hurling groceries at a complete stranger? Here’s your chance. The world’s big-gest food fight takes place on the last Wednesday of August in Bunol, a small town close to Valencia.

A water cannon is fired to signal the start of the fruity festival, as locals and tourists alike take great joy in splattering everyone in sight with over-ripe tomatoes (which, after all, contain 94 per cent water) plucked from trucks parked in the picturesque Plaza del Pueblo. You’ll definitely want to capture this down in high-definition.

After one hour of fast and furious food fighting, the festivities end and fire trucks pump yet more water from the local Roman aqueduct to hose down the streets – and any willing revelers in need of a refreshing rinse.



UNDER THE MACROSCOPE

Under the Macroscopic is a weekly summary of what's happening around the world and what's worth pondering. Stay on top of international and local news with this bulletin produced by the Raffles Economics and Current Affairs Society