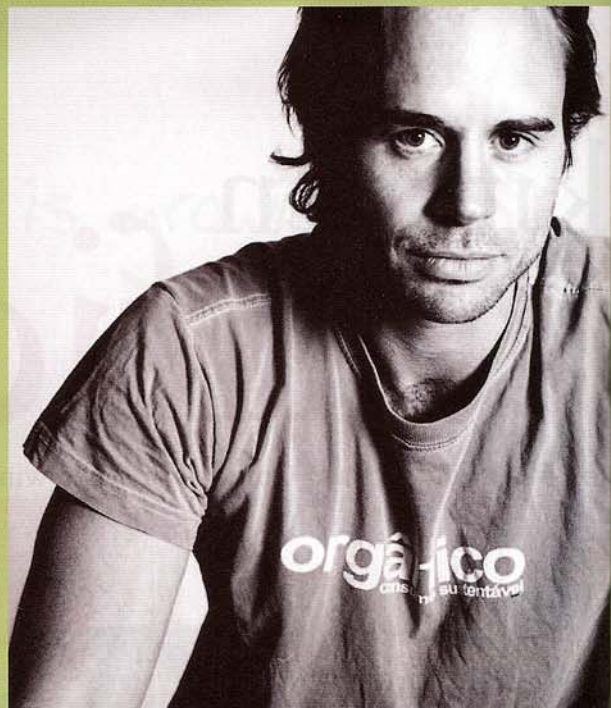


at home with...

Andrew Harding

Battersea's Nature & Kind is a new company offering an online directory of eco-friendly luxury accommodations and tour operators. Founder Andrew Harding explains to **Julian Hall** why eco-aware travellers shouldn't feel they have to compromise comfort for conscience



How did you start Nature & Kind?

After four years of headhunting I decided that it wasn't fulfilling my creative soul and so I took myself away from my London life to go backpacking around Central America. While I was in Guatemala I re-read Virginia McKenna's 'Born Free' and it jolted all my childhood dreams and passions about wildlife and the great outdoors. I left headhunting and ended up project managing Alladale, Europe's first ever wilderness and wildlife reserve in Scotland. From that base that I started to piece together Nature & Kind. I wanted to offer media support to small, privately owned operators in eco-tourism who often have limited marketing budgets and also give the traveller one trusted place to go to search, compare and book travel experiences – by this I mean trips offering time, space, exclusivity, well-being, adventure fulfilment, responsibility and sustainability.

You have a quote on your website from Virginia McKenna, when did you meet?

I met her and Will Travers when I worked for Alladale but I also chose the Born Free Foundation as our first beneficiary of donations (we now also have TUSK), which are made when people booked through our website. She is quoted as saying that 'nature' and 'kind' were two of her favourite words – you can imagine that meant so much to me.

Tell us more about the range of holidays that you offer?

At the moment we have 400 experiences worldwide, principally in Africa, South America, India ranging from accommodation from a luxury safari lodge and a two-man yurt in Patagonia, to a five star city hotel in London, and tailor-made trips in Antarctica. Currently, our most popular trips are gorilla tracking in Rwanda, skiing in Kashmir, journeys in the Amazon and trekking up Kilimanjaro.

Tell us more about your expert guides?

They are a fascinating bunch. Take Patrick Woodhead for example. He was part of the youngest and fastest team to ever reach the South Pole in 2002 and led the first ever east to west traverse of Antarctica. He leads a unique 10-day Antarctic adventure combining exploration with luxury accommodation and food.

What changes in the field of eco-tourism can we expect to see?

A lot of people will be travelling closer to home so that means we'll be looking at new opportunities in the UK and Europe and at eco-friendly transport options such as rail and ferry. Nature & Kind Life members are currently offered three options of getting from A to B when they book a holiday through us with the greenest – the rainforest green option – detailing

everything down to getting picked up in a hybrid car.

What other new developments are you hoping to make with your business?

We're hoping to set up natureandkind.tv, which would house video diaries, travelogues, and discussion forums and would be accessible through internet, mobile and digital TV formats. Then we are possibly going to launch a quarterly member's magazine and in the longer term some travel guides and podcasts. As a brand and lifestyle company we are probably going to be looking at Eco-property next as well. Any new housing development now has to adhere to strict environmental criteria and yet there's not one dedicated green estate agent. We also launched a gift voucher programme which has been picked up as an official nominee gift provider for this year's BAFTAs – and that was after only two weeks in the business!

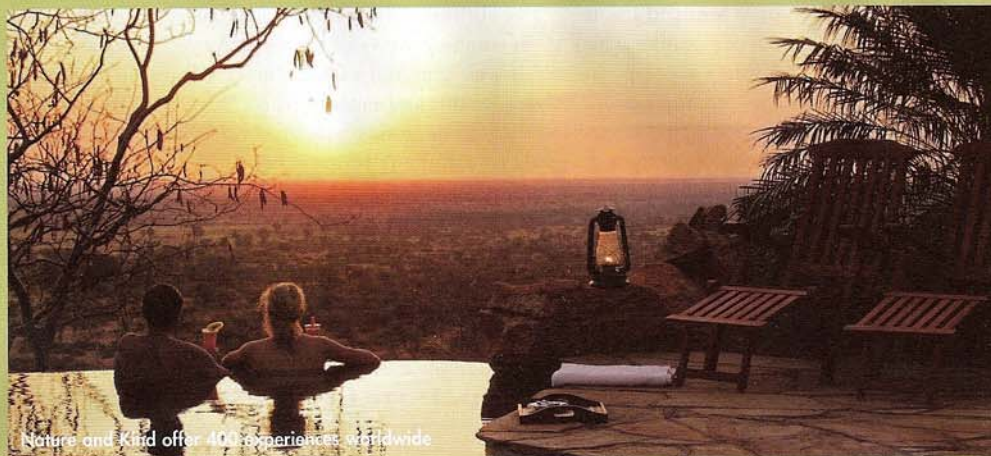
Where are you located?

I work from home off Queenstown Road. I've lived in Battersea for nine years and I have seen a few changes – cars are getting smarter down the roads for a start! There's more size and space then north of the river and I enjoy entertaining so I need room for that. I'm five minutes from Battersea Park and there's nothing better and more inspiring and invigorating than running down the river day or night. I like the feeling of being central but without the hassle of actually being in the centre.

Where do you like to go to eat, drink and relax?

I like Cinnamon Cay on Lavender Hill and my two favourite pubs are The Fox & Hounds on Latchmere Road and The Abbeville. I also like Le Buchon on Queenstown Road and there's always a great deal going on down Northcote Road which I like.

www.NatureandKind.com



Nature and Kind offer 400 experiences worldwide

For a special reader offer on Nature & Kind reward points, see this article on: www.risemagazine.co.uk