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# bold & beautiful

CELEBRATING THE INCREDIBLE WOMEN of 2018

Emma González, Meryl Streep, Beyoncé, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Meghan Markle...

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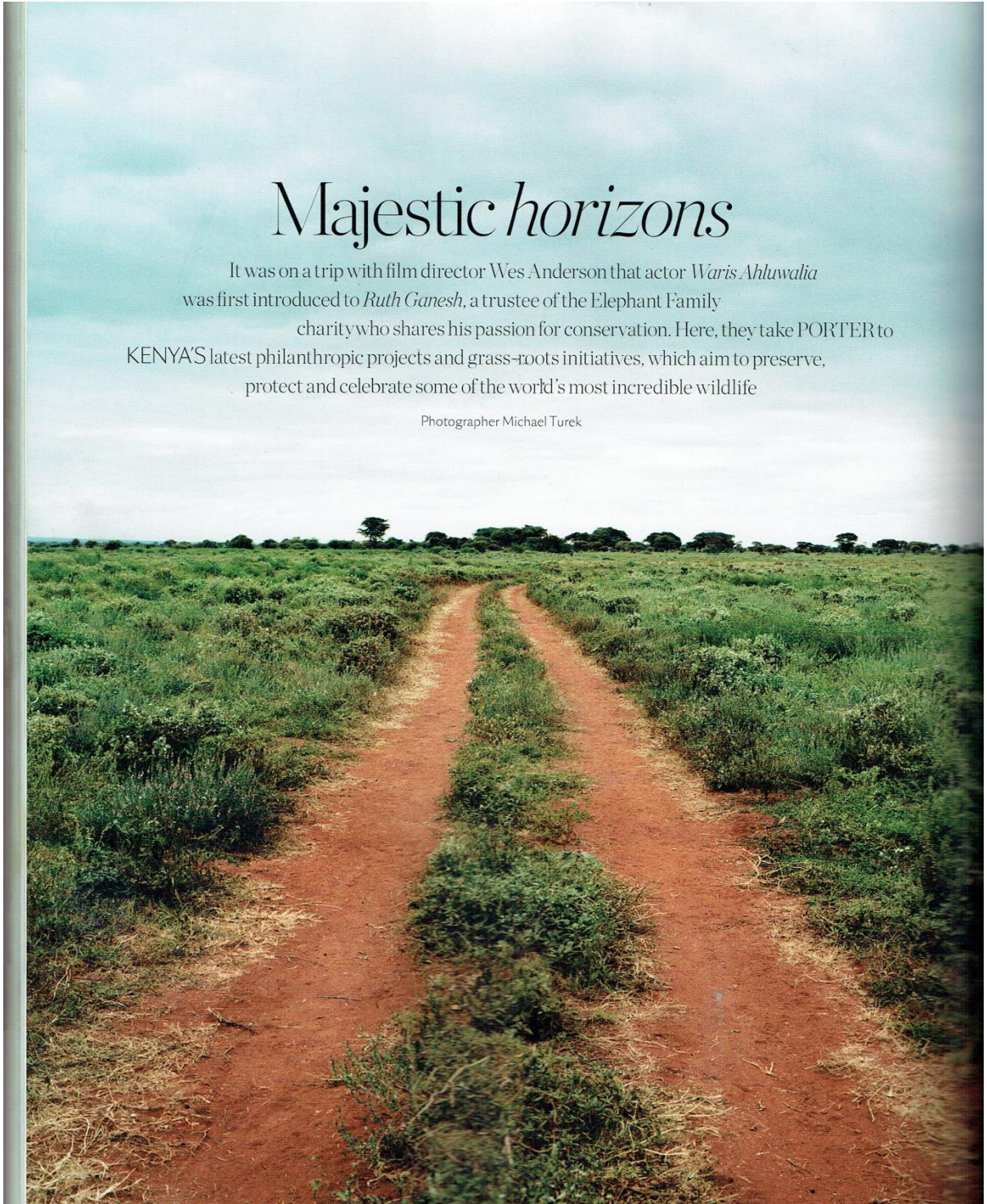




# Majestic *horizons*

It was on a trip with film director Wes Anderson that actor *Waris Ahluwalia* was first introduced to *Ruth Ganesh*, a trustee of the Elephant Family charity who shares his passion for conservation. Here, they take PORTER to KENYA'S latest philanthropic projects and grass-roots initiatives, which aim to preserve, protect and celebrate some of the world's most incredible wildlife

Photographer Michael Turek





out of this world



Actor Waris Ahluwalia  
with Ruth Ganesh of the  
Elephant Family charity:  
the road to the Lion  
Guardian field camp  
in Amboseli, Kenya



out of this world



Elephants at a watering hole  
at Tortilis Camp, Amboseli  
Opposite: Waris having tea  
at a waterfall near Loisaba  
Tented Camp in Laikipia



*My personal relationship with conservation* started just over 10 years ago with a request from film director Wes Anderson. We were in pre-production of *The Darjeeling Limited* and Wes asked me to make a pin for my costume. As we were filming in India, it seemed only right to make an elephant, which in a roundabout way was how I came to be introduced to the late, great Mark Shahid and Ruth Ganesh of Elephant Family ([elephant-family.org](http://elephant-family.org)) – unrelenting protectors of Asian elephants. What started by chance ignited a committed lifelong passion. I made a promise to myself then that I would do my part to protect these majestic animals.

Over the years, Ruth, the tireless former CEO and now a trustee of Elephant Family, and I have worked on a number of projects and conservation operations together. Next summer we're planning one of our dream initiatives, the Animal Ball – what could be better than bringing friends, family and supporters together to drink and dance in support of a world where humans and wildlife could live in synergistic embrace?

#### DAY 1

The night before my flight to Nairobi, I am in Victoria Park in London listening to Patti Smith's cover of Midnight Oil's *Beds Are Burning*: "The time has come/A fact's a fact/It belongs to them/Let's give it back/How can we dance/When our earth is turning/How do we sleep/While our beds are burning?"

It is a protest song about giving Australian Aboriginals, the Pintupi 'lost tribe', their land back. But, in so many ways, this feels like a hymn for the human race right now. In our constant pursuit for answers through countless meditation apps, turmeric-infused lattes or ayahuasca ceremonies, one fact remains: we struggle. As an ever-expanding, invasive species requiring endless amounts of land and resources, we threaten our very existence and that of other species.

So it is with a sense of urgency that Ruth and I set out to meet Space for Giants and Lion Guardians – grass-roots conservation projects offering an alternative model for living in parts of the world where creatures still roam wild.

They have always sounded like superheroes to me, but Lion Guardians headquarters (where guests can follow their conservation work), is a modest array of large canvas tents and buildings camouflaged to blend into the surroundings.

Under a blazing African sun, giving a brief respite from all the unseasonable rain, I join Luke Maamai, the program manager, and two Maasai warriors for a walk – a patrol, really, of the big cats. Kmunu is one of the fiercest warriors and a local legend who is notorious for killing five lions. Out here, killing a lion is like a rite of passage for a young man. It's how he gets his lion name and establishes his perceived worth in society. It's how he attracts a partner to marry. But after the killing of his fifth lion, Kmunu began to question his ways: what had he gained from killing the lions? It was when he met Dr Leela Hazzah, the group's director, that he started to understand the work of Lion Guardians. Kmunu then took on the responsibility of teaching younger warriors, such as Sankuyan, the local heartthrob, how protecting wildlife actually creates enduring benefits for the individual and the community, ones that outweigh the tradition of lion killings.

Every morning, the Lion Guardians set off to walk through their assigned areas to track the movements of the big cats.

Along the way, they meet with the villagers and make sure the community and livestock are safe. They are tasked with the extraordinary purpose of creating a world where lions live in harmony with the people who share their land.

What started as a project in a small area of Amboseli and Tsavo in 2007 with five Lion Guardians has expanded to almost one million acres over Kenya and Tanzania. Working alongside the community, Leela and the group's director of science, Dr Stephanie Dolrenry, have established a huge amount of trust, which has allowed them to create conservation programs based on science and indigenous knowledge. Their methods have been rather successful. Outside of the protected area, this is the only growing lion population in the world. Everywhere else, it's on the decline.

#### DAY 2

At Tortilis Camp, our home for the few days we spend with Lion Guardians, we have a dining table with the best view of the local watering hole. As if stage-directed, this morning over breakfast, a zeal of zebras silently pace by, followed by a small herd of elephants and, sneaking around in the tall grass, we just make out the silhouette of a hyena.

#### DAY 3

Today, Mingati, a village elder, takes us on a tour of his boma, >

*"I will be sad to leave my new friends, but we part with a small shift of perspective on both sides"*





a small fortified village with enclosures for livestock. We speak with Mingati's two wives over sweet tea about the value of the land, tradition and the lions, which help to preserve their culture as the modern world encroaches. They support each other in ways that we can only learn from. One of my favorite concepts is that of 'co-fathers'. When villagers have children here, they can turn to a group of co-fathers made up of village elders for advice and guidance. The conversation naturally leads to my non-marital status and age. I am thrilled when they have me down as 20 and too young for marriage. Kmunu said if he was in New York, he would gather everyone I knew and have an intervention. Now imagine having to explain to men younger than me, who protect lions, raise livestock, and are long married with children, about my fear of commitment.

I am sad to leave my new friends, but we part with a small shift of perspective and understanding on both sides.

#### DAY 4

Our little Cessna heads north to Loisaba in Laikipia county, a 56,000-acre wildlife conservancy and working ranch, to meet with Dr Max Graham, CEO of Space for Giants, which protects the land that elephants require to thrive. The elephant is a keystone species. If removed, it would have a drastic, negative impact on the world's ecosystem. With The Nature Conservancy, Space for Giants help secure the habitat, directing funds from ecotourism to protect wildlife and bring benefits to local tribes.

Then, there's the constant threat to the African elephant: poachers. We spend an afternoon walking with a unit from the National Police Reserve (NPR) and their rather lovable dogs – Machine and Warrior. Space for Giants also helps to fund training for frontline rangers and specialist mobile units that patrol not just Loisaba, but the whole area. But it's not enough to just catch a poacher. The cases have to result in convictions to deter other poachers, so Space for Giants trains investigators, prosecutors and magistrates to increase convictions.

#### DAY 5

Just before sunrise on our last day, as we head out for a morning drive, we come across a guinea fowl perched atop an acacia tree. Then, just a few feet down the road, we hit safari gold. Through the bushes, gazing at us intently, is a leopard. We sit and wait until she darts across the road right in front of us. We might have waited a long time, but were distracted by a lunch set for us amid the glory of the expansive earth, underneath a gray-headed social weaver tree. "I think I could live here forever," I muse aloud.

Ruth reminds me that this is all very well but we have a ball to organize in June. There are animal masks to be made, dresses to be sewn, suits to be stitched, and habitats to be saved. So we pile into the Cessna and wave our friends goodbye until they are tiny specks in the undulating savannah.

"It belongs to them" – Patti Smith's song rings in my ears above the sound of the engine: "Let's give it back."

**NEED TO KNOW** *Natural World Safaris offers safaris from £3,960 per person full board, including one night in Nairobi, three nights at Elewana Tortilis Camp, three nights at Elewana Loisaba Camp, internal flights and transfers; [naturalworldsafaris.com](http://naturalworldsafaris.com). Access to Lion Guardians and Space for Giants can be organized by special arrangement.*

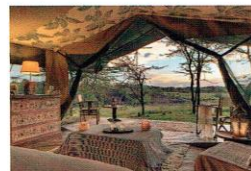
## Best luxury eco-lodges for spotting wildlife



*Sirikoi in Lewa Wildlife Conservancy*

Sirikoi is set in the center of Lewa on the northern slopes of Mount Kenya. Surrounded by 68,000 acres of Unesco World Heritage wilderness, Sirikoi is a blend of luxurious and wholesome, offering a

farm-to-plate dining experience using produce straight from its organic fruit and vegetable garden. There are three lodges and four luxury tented rooms along the spring-fed stream, each with a private deck. Sirikoi works closely with the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy and its Rhino Conservation Programme, whose late inspirational co-founder, Anna Merz, is remembered for reading Shakespeare to her beloved rhinos and banishing poachers by integrating local communities in her vision.



*Richard's Camp in the Maasai Mara*

Perfectly set on the banks of the Njageteck River, this is a luxury tented camp in the very heart of the Maasai Mara. With seven sumptuous tents, Richard's Camp is both intimate and adventurous.

There's plenty to do, whether it's night game drives, visiting a local village or forays in a hot-air balloon. Rangers form the backbone of Mara Elephant Project, whose goal is to improve elephant-human relations. Elephants are tracked using GPS and drones to herd them into sanctuaries. School children are taught anti-poaching values and take great pleasure in telling their parents off for not following suit.



*Ol Donyo Lodge in the Chyulu Hills*

Nestled in thick woodland on a gently sloping hillside, Ol Donyo has views out over the plains to a distant, snow-speckled Kilimanjaro. Six suites are woven into the arid landscape, each with their

own plunge pool and roof terrace. Guests can arrange to sleep on the roof, in a gossamer-canopied bed, encircled by candlelit lanterns. Ol Donyo gives off a romantic, old-world elegance, with its wicker armchairs, striking African art and warm ochre walls. It was founded by award-winning conservationist Richard Bonham, who is one of the founders of the Big Life Foundation. Since its inception in 2010, Big Life has employed hundreds of Maasai rangers, who use tracker dogs and aerial surveillance to prevent poaching. Lions have been brought back from the edge of extinction, thanks to their efforts.



out of this world



**NEED TO KNOW** *Natural World Safaris works closely with the three conservation foundations and can arrange stays at the lodges from £8,690 per person full board. Price includes one night in Nairobi, plus three nights each at Ol Donyo, Richard's Camp and Sirikoi, internal flights and transfers. Natural World Safaris will make a charitable donation of £350 to each of the three projects if you quote PORTER while booking. For more information, visit [naturalworldsafaris.com](http://naturalworldsafaris.com)*



Clockwise from top left: Lion Guardian Kamunu Saitoti (left), teaches younger warriors about protecting wildlife; Loisaba Tented Camp, Laikipia; Ruth in the Lion Guardian's field camp; anti-poaching unit near Loisaba Tented Camp



SEE IT. SCAN IT. SHOP IT.

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