

**REFLECTIONS  
OF A JOURNEY**

Nele Winkelmann / 2018



## #1 STRUCTURED

At the beginning of this journey I was ready to leave my home behind.

Not knowing what to expect, I was sure this trip would be challenging on many levels. However, looking back now, leaving the well organised and secure environment of my home behind, gave me the opportunity to grow as a person and as a photographer.

Away from the stability of all that's familiar, I found myself in unpredictable situations some positive and some negative.

*Reflections of a Journey* illustrates this process and combines images taken throughout my journey - spanning 18 months and 9 countries - with architectural photographs putting my emotional state at certain times of my trip in visual form.

The results are 18 very personal multimedia art works full of memories and lessons reflecting on a journey across the globe.

53° 33' 3.906" N 9° 59' 37.255" E

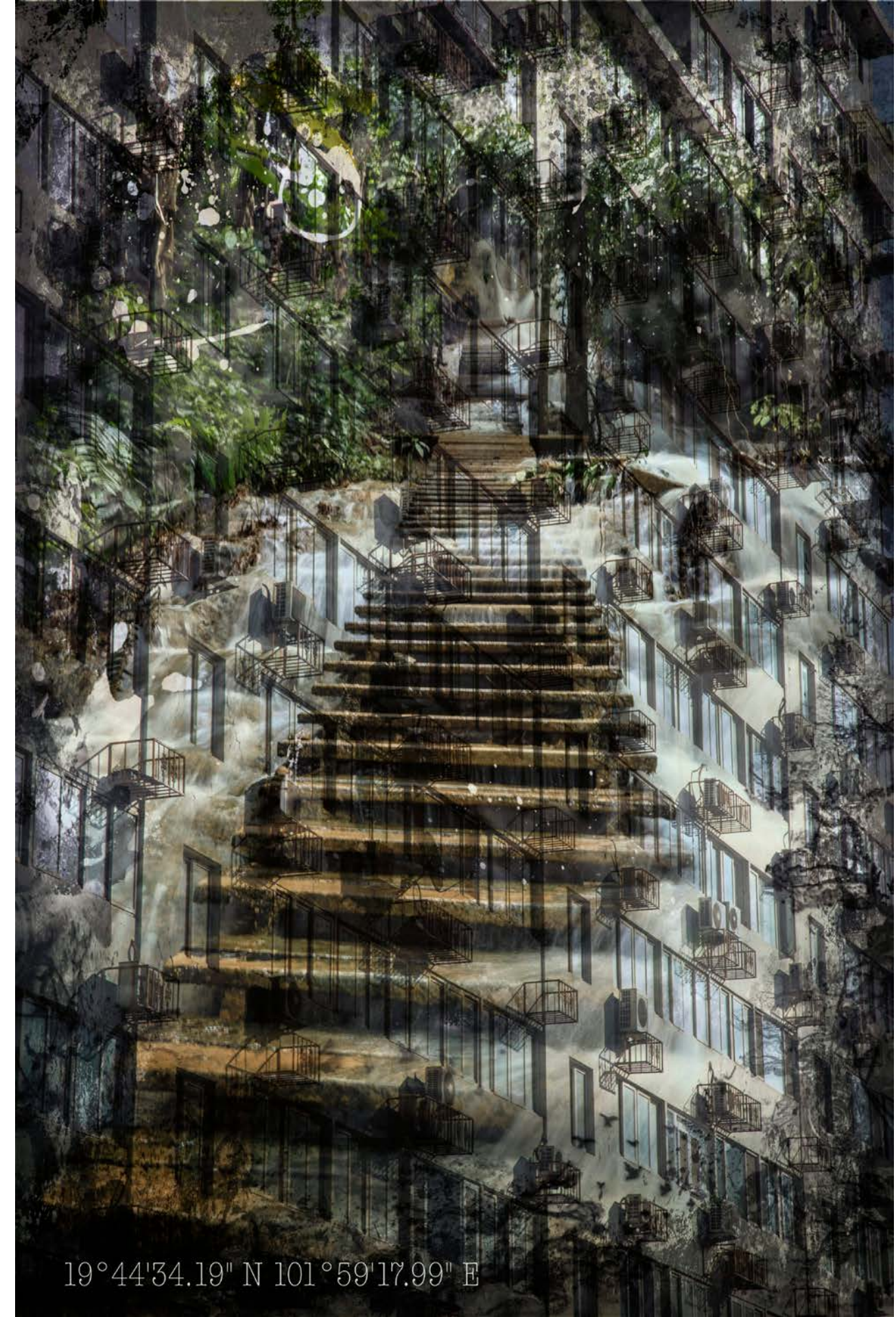
## #2 OVERWHELMING

Hot, humid, noisy, crowded - these were my first associations after stepping off the plane in Bangkok.

With no sign I could read, no language I could speak and no idea where I wanted to go from here, my first ever stop in Asia completely overwhelmed me at the start.

Confusing shopping malls and relentless Tuk-Tuk drivers made it a challenge to walk around the city, get lost and explore on my own terms like I did so many times before in Europe and America.

The endless identical apartment blocks of China's capital city reminded me of these first few days in Bangkok. Feeling trapped and alone in a city with a million other souls around you, yet still like walking up the steps at Kuang Si waterfalls, it can be hard to find your footing.



19°44'34.19" N 101°59'17.99" E

## #3 CHAOS

Roads that didn't make any sense, impossibly hectic traffic and rush hour that lasted all day, made the first weeks a real challenge and navigating through the crowds and heavy rainfalls of late August took a while to get used to.

A lesson I learned though is, that what feels overwhelming at the time, often ends up helping you grow further and faster than anything accomplished within your comfort zone.

At the end of my time in Bangkok, I understood the city. I felt free and more confident to explore the less urban parts of Asia away from the big city buzz and away from the security and structures I grew accustomed to within the western culture.



10°36'33.55" N 103°31'46.49" E

## #4 INDEPENDENT

From Thailand, through Laos and Vietnam I learned to grow as a person. Making new friends and leaving them again to make my own way, was a part of this journey and everybody I met even just for the briefest time contributed to this story.

Having a companion along the crazy adventures is often reassuring in times when we are not too sure, but the ultimate freedom I experienced traveling alone appealed to me as well.

When at the start of my trip I felt lonely because I didn't know anyone, after months of traveling, meeting new people and leaving them again I noticed, I wasn't alone, but rather independent.

Strong, and certain about myself I concentrated on what I wanted to do and see, while the worries on how to achieve those dreams took a backseat and often were a lot easier to sort out than first imagined.



## #5 CLARITY

Spending a month far away from the busy streets of the cities and tourist buzz of old temples, I found clarity and purpose living among a community of yogis close to the beaches of Cambodia.

Slowing down the pace of traveling and not planning too far ahead was key for me to really appreciate the journey I had been on to this point.

I also learned how less adventures can be more in the long run. Focusing on a few areas and spending a longer period of time in each place, I felt far more connected with myself and with the culture around me.

Beijing Airport train station symbolised this realisation for me with it's perfectly clean and modern design. A clear path leading forward and the almost peaceful silence in the early morning hours showed me a way to follow while giving me space and clarity to fully experience the moment.

With every mile I go, new opportunities and challenges are awaiting and every day I get a clearer and more detailed picture of the world we live in.

## #6 ARTISTIC

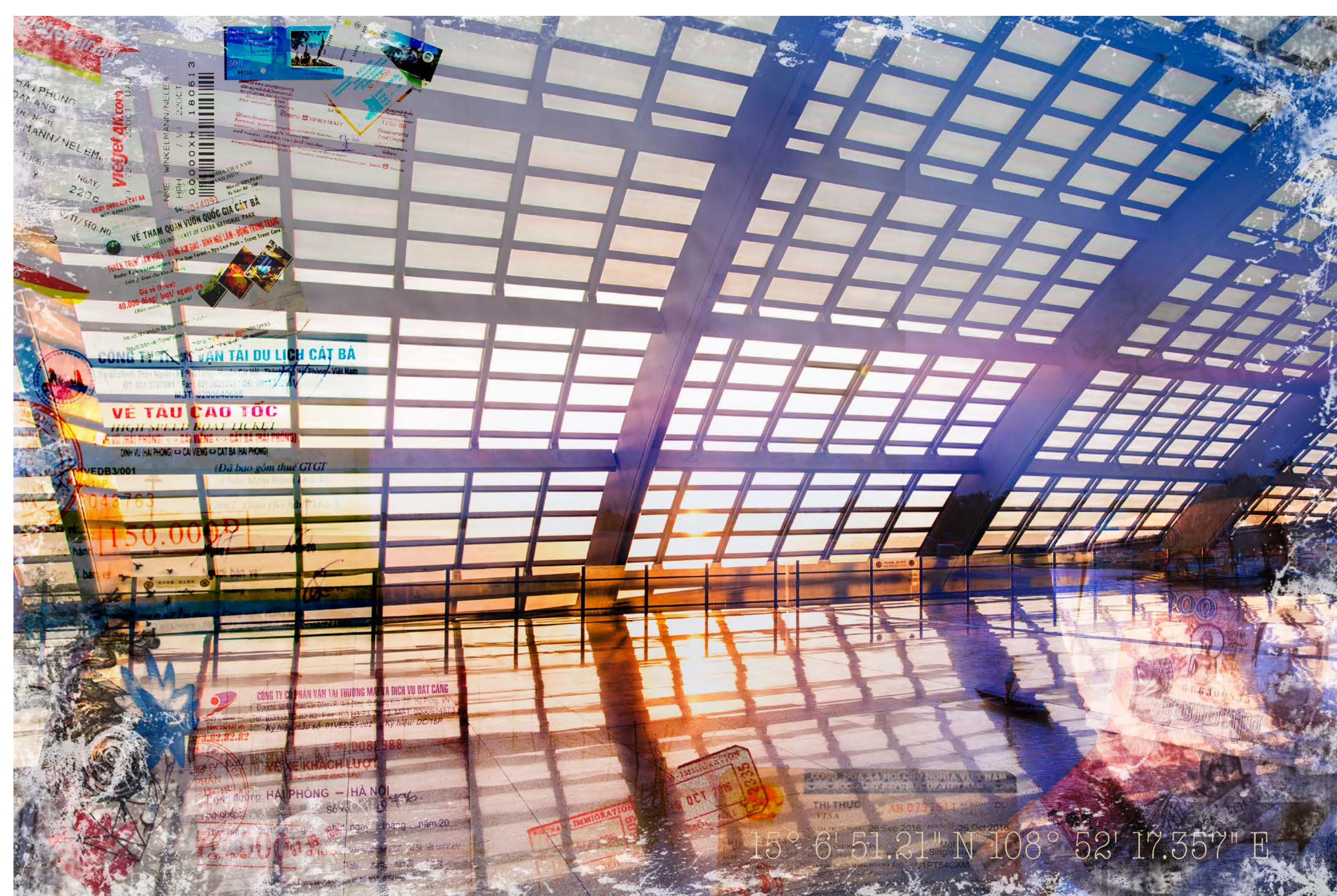
Being on the road, it is easy to forget where we all started off from. Leaving Hamburg, my job, my friends and my family I got to live a new life which ever way I wanted.

Far away from expectations and ideals, traveling presents us with an opportunity to behave like somebody else. Be that person we secretly crave to be.

On Bali, I focused on my creative thoughts again. Using my camera to create art and tell stories, not as part of my daily job but because there is something I'd like to share.

The colourful fields of Bali and the new design of the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg symbolically combine these thoughts.





## #7 FREEDOM

After five months in Asia, I moved on to wander a new part of the earth.  
Leaving Asia, I felt free, strong and confident.  
Remembering the first days in Thailand, I was now sitting at the airport in Bali ready to move on once again.

Asia has been an amazing opportunity and has still so much left to explore some other time.

Leaving the popular tourist routes and focusing on my personal journey rather than places to tick off because people at home expect you to go, has been liberating and presented me with the chance to really get to know a different culture.

Leaving the continent of the rising sun, I stepped on a plane with a new found curiosity, ready to embark about 13 hours later at the end of the world in New Zealand.





-39°16'21.75" S 175°34'48.82" E

## #8 INTERFERENCE

Traveling is not always blissful, happiness and endless possibilities.

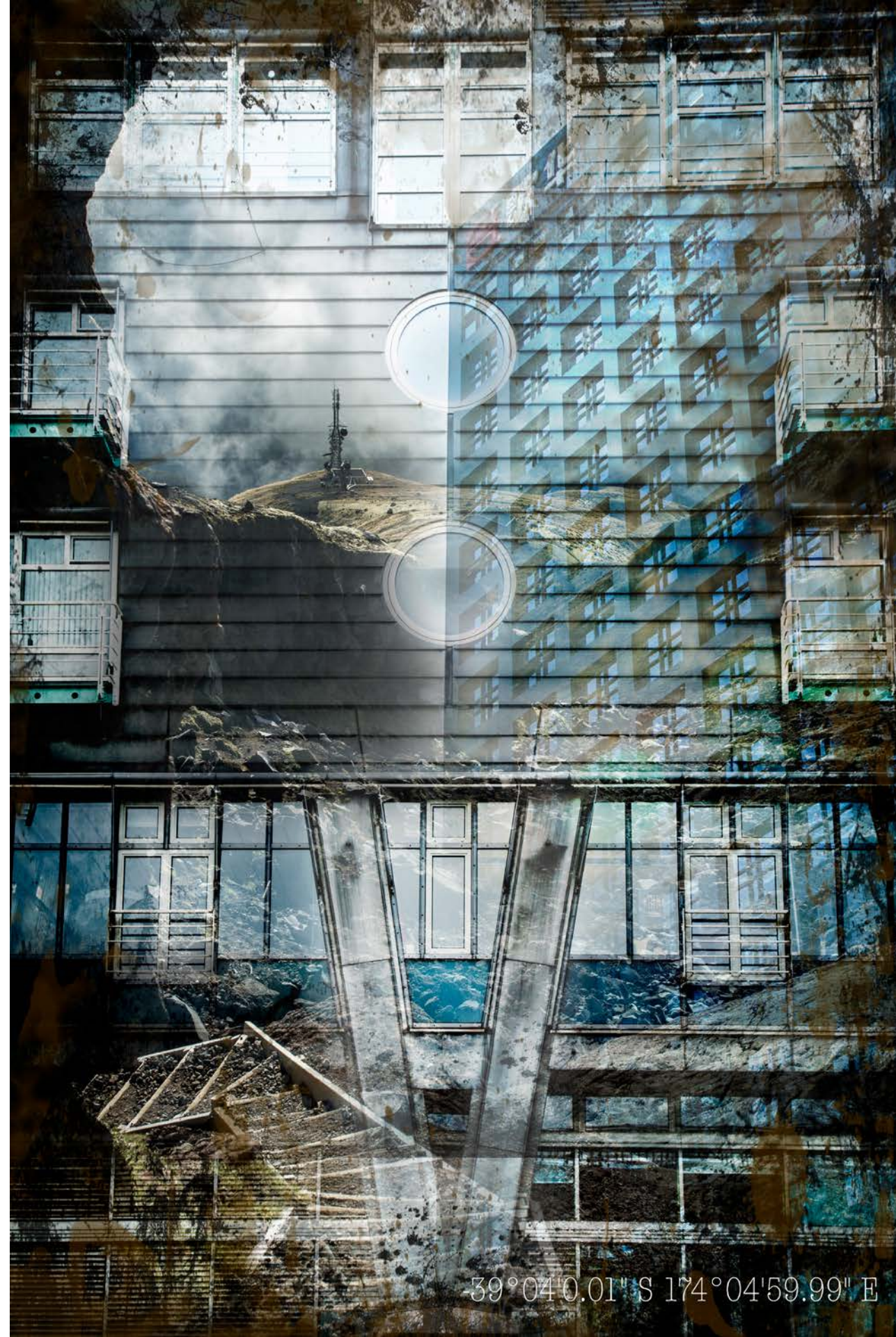
Arriving in New Zealand I was struggling.

With no money in my bank account and no job lined up, I was properly the closest to returning home I have ever been on this journey.

However, while hitchhiking across the country, sleeping in a tent and living of approximately NZ\$10 a week I learned that memories and photographs are more precious than souvenirs and fancy hotel beds.

Luckily, I found a job a couple of weeks later and knowing how to live without money, my finances recovered fast.

Looking back now, I still wouldn't change this part of my journey as it made me more aware of the struggles of long time travelling while simultaneously learning what's really important.



## #9 STABILITY

Working a job, living in an apartment and doing regular everyday things for the first time in 7 months slowed down my travelling and vagabond lifestyle.

In a small town on New Zealand's South Island I decided to unpack my bag and settle down for a few months.

Traveling far and for a long time can leave you tired and aching for the stability of a 'normal' life.

The perfect symmetric construction and strong foundation of an apartment complex in Hamburg symbolised this feeling for me.

Combining this image from my home with a view of Mount Taranaki - the highest mountain on new Zealand's North Island created an image with an airy atmosphere transporting the sense of freedom travellers ache for, while simultaneously giving the support and stability necessary to carry on.



## #IO EXPOSED

Being exposed to numerous new situations is one of the key elements of traveling.

Some may be positive and others not so much.

New cultures, new people, new mentalities and new landscapes will fuel your mind and inspire creative projects.

Moving from the small town to a larger city and starting to work full time as a photographer again, for me was key to unlock my creative energy once more.

A new surrounding and interacting with other creatives can do that as long as one is open to the new and unknown that is coming.

Hiking the Kepler Track I found myself on a three day hike through New Zealand's Fiordlands and looking up at the sky it felt full of possibilities and wonder.

Combining this image with the old and traditional building of the Hamburg Elbtunnel the traditional appears to open up to the new, exposing us to the future.

-45°26'18.29" S 167°41'13.79" E

## #II MELANCHOLY

The thing about settling down after a long time on the road is that even a relatively short amount of time spend in one place seems like a lifetime after constantly moving for months.

Though I enjoyed my time in Christchurch and my new job in Photography, I also missed the chances and excitement coming from a vagabond life.

Dreaming of the past months of 'easy' traveling the now found stability of a 9-5 job felt more like being inside a glorious mountain but with no view to reward you.

Adapting to the old lifestyle can be a struggle and finding balance isn't as easy as it seems.

However, the key, for me was to not give in to the melancholy, but instead find excitement in this new life and place.





-43°26'13.19" S 169°57'31.19" E

## #12 VIBRANT (PREVIOUS PAGE)

Once I found my healthy balance I managed just that. I found joy in exploring my new hometown and I learnt once again that it's not important how far you travel, as there is something unique to explore everywhere you go.

The vibrant colours of New Zealand's landscapes make every drive an adventure and the beautiful and deserted hillsides are just waiting for people to roam around. Going on a short drive around the country side I realised how much I had come to love this part of the world, and how little I wanted to move on from here.

One year of traveling had taken me across three continents and while I still felt like an explorer in New Zealand, I also felt like I belonged.

## #13 VITALITY

For many to travel means to feel alive. To wander the unknown, to climb up mountains or to find hidden waterfalls gives a day meaning that at home would be spend doing insignificant browsing online. Full of possibilities and excitement we fell alive because we actively take charge of our life.

We are doing something!  
Feeling strong, independent and confident are all things we learn while traveling but the most important aspect for me is the realisation how great the world is and how incredible lucky we are to be alive at a time free to explore and go wherever the wind may take us.



-44°28'59.99" S 169°57'59.99" E



## #14 REPETITIVE

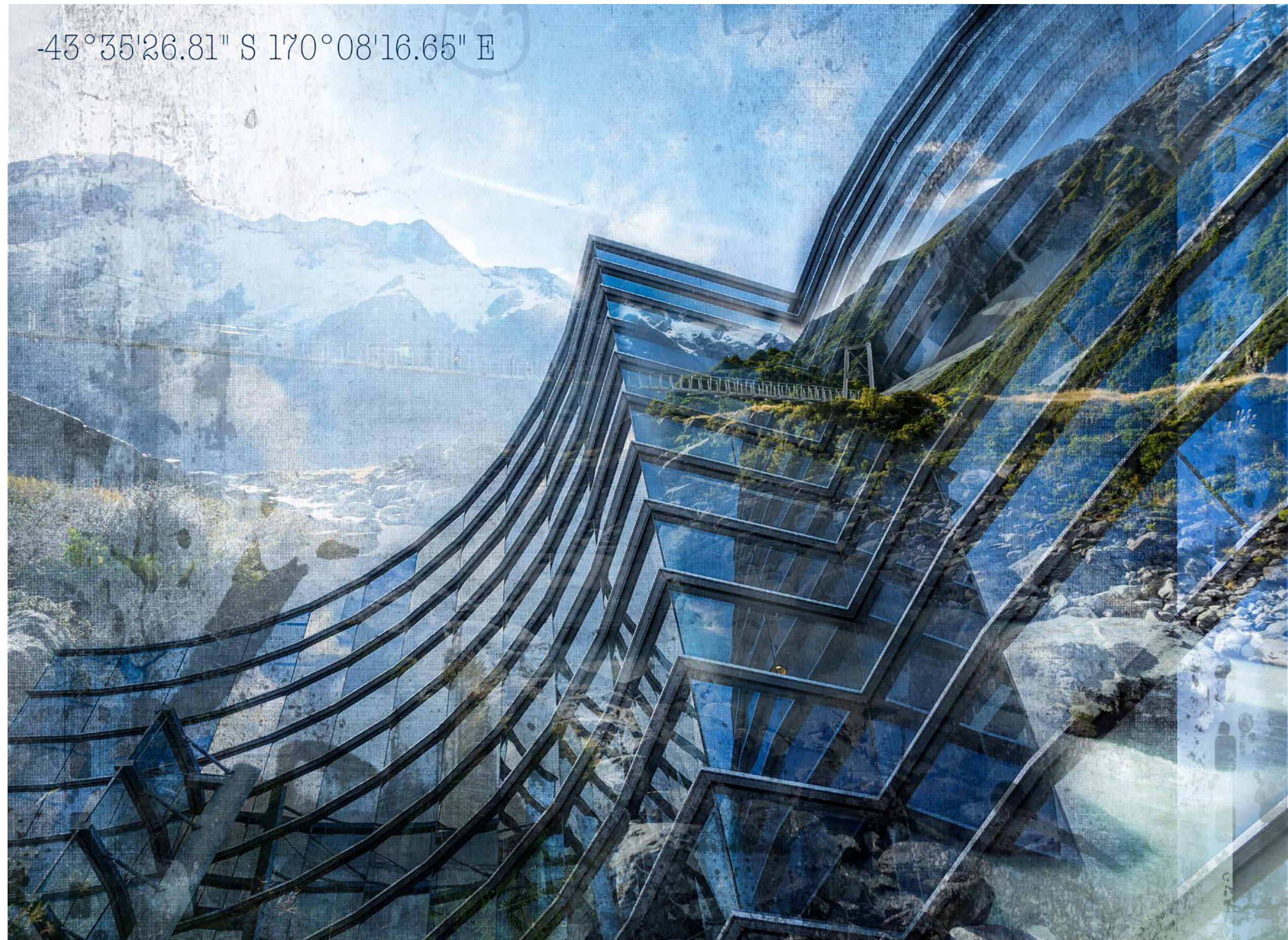
Traveling too far too quickly can make us tired of exploring. Trying to fit too much into a limited time frame will result in us feeling like we have to go everywhere and see everything in order to properly 'do' a place.

When speaking to other travellers that is what many describe their adventures with. *I did Asia'* or *'I did Queenstown'*.

Personally I don't think you can ever really 'do' a place, never mind a continent fully. There will always be something left you haven't seen and something new to follow, but when traveling we don't actually have to see everything of every place.

If we try, traveling is no longer exciting and freeing but rather a dull task, repeating itself by hiking yet another mountain and watching yet another sunset. Keeping it light, and really just going to places I personally care about, will create far more significant memories.

-43°35'26.81" S 170°08'16.65" E

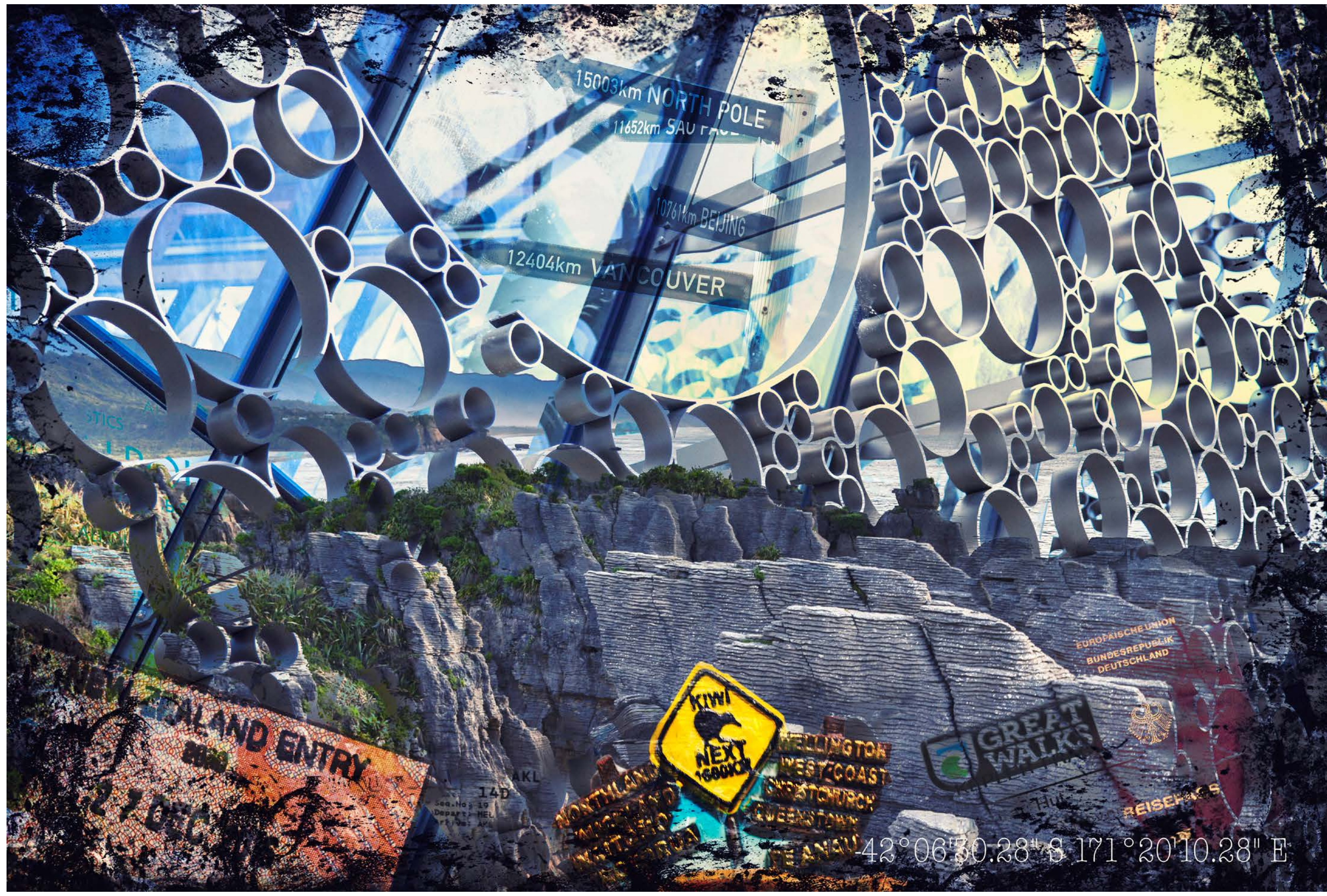


## #15 INSPIRE

Get inspired by nature, new cultures or new people. What makes traveling so interesting is that we constantly find ourselves in new situations different from anything we experienced before.

This can inspire the creative mind as a photographer, but also as a regular traveller. By sharing stories we learn about places and than can feel inspired to travel on and explore further for ourselves.





## #16 FLEXIBILITY

Once inspired to go somewhere new, flexibility while on the road is important to make new plans and change the course we thought we should be taking.

After almost a year in New Zealand I changed my course. Realising there really wasn't anything waiting for me at home, I decided to carry on and just not go. Coming to New Zealand, I was looking for a substitute to stop the melancholy and memories of my canadian adventures ruling my life.

What I found, was a country of stunning natural beauty, welcoming and friendly people and most importantly myself.

So when it was time to make plans for the time after New Zealand, I felt relieved by the idea of simply not leaving and continuing my reflective journey down here.

-39°28'59.99" S 176°55'0.01" E



## #17 ADVENTURE

Fueling our sense for adventure is arguably one of the main motivations to leave home and start traveling.

It's this thing - this wanderlust - those itchy feet. It's your heart that just tells you that it's time to go.

This is the closest I have ever come to explaining the travel bug. Truth is, adventure isn't the main motivator for me anymore though.

Nowadays it's roaming streets and interacting with new cultures. I don't have to do action packed trips and go skydiving to feel like my journey has a purpose.

Being on this journey and reflecting on everything I have experienced while traveling is enough to keep my wanderlust fueled and my feet itching.

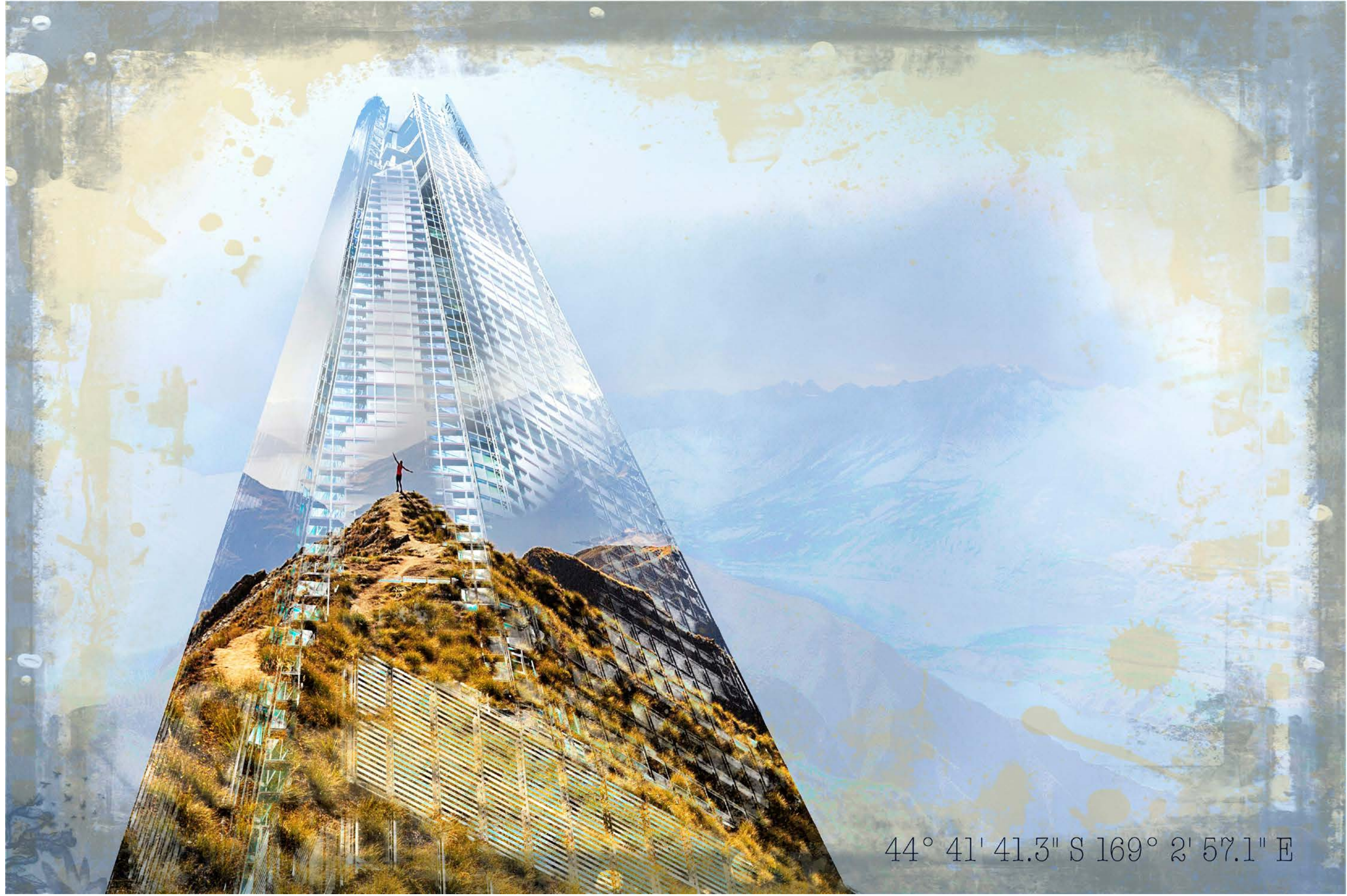
## #18 INDEFINITE

These 18 months of traveling helped me grow as a person but also helped me to see the world around me more clearly. When before I was set in traditions and expectations from home, wandering the globe I learned to let go, embrace opportunities and just keep on going.

Whether hiking up mountains and reaching the top to simply enjoy the view or to get a new perspective, from above the world looks different and when before I was feeling a little sad or alone in an unknown place, usually I can see clearly and reset my mind when I reach the peak. Often creating a new memory I might one day look back to longingly.

The thing with memories is after all, often we will remember the small at first almost insignificant moments in between the big adventures.

In the end, I never returned home. I visit my family and catch up with friends but I love seeing the world that surrounds us and while traveling I learned how to do just that.



44° 41' 41.3" S 169° 2' 57.1" E

