

The Manager Abroad

77 Kind Acts

By James Markey

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INTRO / REFLECTION

Now that it's written, convention dictates I now need to introduce you to it. Or, rather, reflect upon what I'm submitting to the world and convey to you what it contains.

First off, please be kind reading this book.

I will release this book, with great excitement and perhaps a bit too much eagerness. I guarantee you the first person who will write to me (on paper, too) will be a person having pleasure pointing out that I have missed a full stop here, or a semi-colon over there. I will have already spotted it and annoyed myself to no end about it but that letter will still arrive. It always does. However, it's worth it. It's worth doing what you want to do just because you want to do it because that person writing in is the exception. Other people will write in (by email, or through Good Reads and Amazon) and be pleasant and nice (I hope) and I am forever grateful for that.

That is what this book is all about. It's about the big difference that small acts make on a daily basis. They may not get mentioned, you may not write home about them but they can make or break your day.

It's also about giving you a point of reference for more people. The person who was kind just happened to be Muslim or just happened to be Jewish, or just happened to be wearing a hijab, or just happened to be a posh banker or just happened to be just like you.

This book is to provide you with a reference for the ordinary. Us ordinary people tend to be good and try to do good. The news is reporting by exception. It gives you the stuff that is bad and those people happen to be Muslim, or happen to be Jewish, or just happen to be wearing a hijab, or just happen to be a posh banker or just happen to be just like you.

Yet we think of it as the exception when the person is just like you, or just like your friends because you have a different frame of reference to contradict it but it becomes the expectation for others when we have no other reference. I want to give you a new reference because everywhere I went, everyone I met, showed kindness, generosity and understanding.

But let's rewind for a second and tell you about my life before all this...

THE EASY LIFE



Opening a new store in Littlehampton



Team wins a competition at Richmond



Opening a new store in Edinburgh

The Easy Life

I got lucky. I don't hide that. I was born into a upcoming middle-class family with a strong work ethic. One which supported me. Gave me the belief that I could, and would, do well. I was born in a fairly nice area. In a pretty good country, with a pretty good economy. Granting me a passport which allows me to travel pretty much anywhere with the minimal of hassle or border checks or suspicion. Nobody held any real prejudices against me growing up and, as long as I worked hard enough, it was a given I would do well.

Until recently, I never realised how privileged that made me.

When I was 18 I decided to shun university and the crippling fees, continuing to keep at my part time job with Iceland Foods. Still, I continued to be lucky. I had a manager who inspired me, pushed me and opened up opportunities for me. Sure, I worked hard. Often for free. Often for incredibly long hours. Sure, but a lot of people do too.

That doesn't make me special.

So I kept at it. When I was 18 I pro-temped my first store and bought a basement flat. At 19, my name appeared as Store Manager on the receipts. At 20, I was headhunted by a recruitment company for Russell & Bromley. A pay increase. At 24, I reopened the Scottish flagship store in Edinburgh after a large refit. Another pay increase.

That doesn't make me special.

Whatever you want to put it down to: being in the right place, being given the right teams, hard work or just pure, discriminate, Markey luck. Either way, the results always came in, so I kept moving on up.

Life was fun. Life was easy. Why would you want to change that?

I certainly didn't. Until... The phone call came.

THE PHONE CALL

RING



RING

The Phone Call

My opinion changed one November and it all started with a call.

“Is that James Markey?” “It is. Can I help you?”

“I just had the best shopping experience in your store.”

“That’s great. I’m actually on a day off though, would you mind just telling the team how great it was? It’d make a really big difference to their day and I’d appreciate that.”

“No, no, you don’t understand. I already have. The reason I’m calling is I’m a recruiter and want you to come for an interview.”

“Ha ha. Sorry, I don’t think you understood. I’m on a day off. How do you know the team’s just really happy I’m not there?”

“No, no no. There’s no way it just happens to be that good. I asked if you were in and the lady serving me sung your praises. These things don’t just happen.”

“You’re too kind. You’re putting too much of the experience down to me. I’ve been there four months, there’s a hell of a lot to do still.”

“Maybe... But, entertain me anyway with this job. It’s an Area Manager role...”

“Ah, well that is what I want to do next, I guess. Which company?”

“It’s exciting! You see.... It’s actually in Saudi Arabia”

“Okay. Tell me. What’s Saudi Arabia like?”

“You don’t know anything about the place?”

I didn’t know anything about any place. Maybe I should.

By JP Markey

THE LEAP OF FAITH



Istanbul, Turkey. What started it all!

The Leap of Faith

I knew nothing about Saudi and my ignorance was blatant, even to myself. Yet, I went for the telephone interview. Then, I went for the face to face interview in London. Then, I agreed a salary. Then, I asked myself what on Earth was I doing.

The recruiter told me I would live on a “westernised compound”, but not to worry, there’d be an army tank outside. Sounds safe.

It’s at this point I decided I should probably start doing some research. I wasn’t totally isolated on our island. I’d left the UK before. I’d been to France. Some newspaper holidays in The Netherlands and a couple of other places. True, but I lived under my own little rock within my own little bubble. Ignorance had been bliss.

That’s when I had the idea to travel to the furthest away place I could get to in a weekend that would be just like Saudi Arabia. The place I picked? Istanbul, Turkey. What d’ya reckon: just like Saudi Arabia?

OK, not quite Saudi, it turns out. I had the best weekend of my little life. I met the most gregarious gentleman and the connected with the most loveliest lady. I had never been terribly emotional, but even so, I broke up and wept on the plane home. I wrote on my phone:

*“I want to go exploring everywhere, be standing still nowhere.
I want to go do everything, whilst relaxing doing nothing.”*

Poetic nonsense? Sure is. Yet, I knew I would have to take the Saudi job and get paid to travel somewhere new. I arrived home, picked up a voice message and **the job had fallen through.**

What started as a phone call ended up being a wakeup call. I knew there was more to the world now. Nothing left to do but take a leap of faith that I could restart life later, leave my job and start exploring.

THE JOURNEY

England



Population 53m.

GDP: \$2 trillion.

Prime Minister: Theresa May.

Jordan



Population 9.5m.

GDP: \$39 billion.

King: Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein.

Egypt



Population 96m.

GDP: \$336 billion.

President: Abdel Fattah el-Sisi.

Turkey



Population 80m.

GDP: \$856 billion.

President: Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

South Africa



Population 56m.

GDP: \$285 billion.

President : Cyril Ramaphosa.

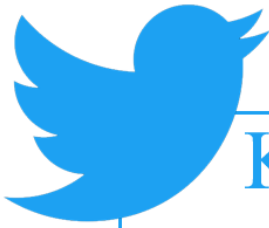
Australia



Population 24m.

GDP: \$1.2 trillion.

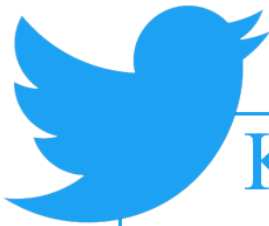
Prime Minister: Malcolm Turnbull.



Kind Act #1

Location: England

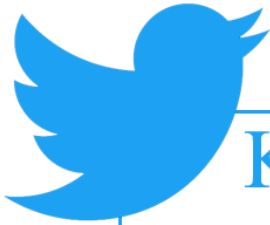
Tweet: I forgot my phone on a seat and go to leave airport. Two minutes later man chases me saying I've forgotten something. #KindActs



Kind Act #2

Location: Amman, Jordan.

Tweet: Locals from Jordan show me around the Roman Theatre and help me with everything and to navigate language barriers #KindActs



Kind Act #3

Location: Wadi Musa, Jordan.

Tweet: Student in Wadi Musa shows me around, buys me drink and sweet to welcome me to the city #KindActs



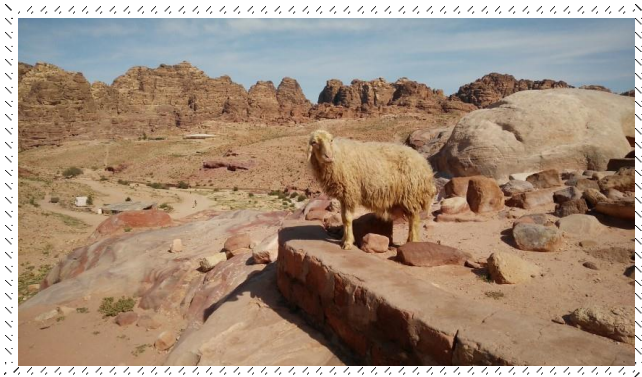
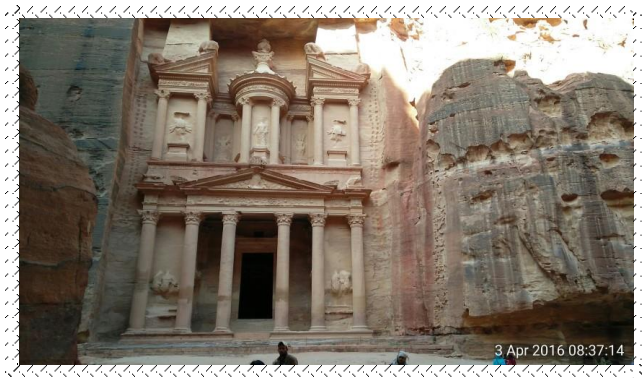
Kind Act #4

Location: Amman, Jordan.

Tweet: Forget my beloved Amazon Kindle at a hostel in Jordan. Return a day later and it's been kept behind the desk for me! #KindActs

WONDER #1

PETRA, JORDAN.





Going to Petra whilst there's a war in Syria is an odd experience. I found myself walking around this marvellous structure with barely a tourist in sight.

Making it one of those experiences which is equally calming and unnerving at the same time.

The site was huge. Walking for hours and reminding myself to use the toilet every time I saw one because there might not be another! The people selling touristy items weren't in the usual selling-mode you normally see across the world. Perhaps it's a calmer trade here, perhaps it's because of the war next door or perhaps the lack of tourists to sell to. Either way, it gave a unique chance to chat with some of the lovely people, drink tea with them and discover more about the area, the culture and the mood of the people.

Some interesting facts:

- You might recognise Petra from Indiana Jones!
- Dates to ~300 B.C was the capital of the Nabatean Kingdom.
- Nicknamed the "rose city" due to pink sand cliffs.

Life Experience: The Syrian Hijab

“The news is, by definition, reported because it’s the exception. Though we use it to form our expectations where life has failed to give us experience for the context of those environments”

Jordan was the first time I found myself face to face with a woman wearing a hijab. Not just any woman. A Syrian woman. A Syrian, refugee woman, who was seeking a temporary life in Jordan.

I felt uncomfortable.

Wouldn’t you?

The problem is, the picture these words paint for anyone who relies only on media as a reference point couldn’t be any more factual but nevertheless couldn’t be any more further away from the truth either.

This Syrian refugee had a name. She’s called Sarah. She’s 24, just like me. The hijab she was wearing was beautiful, elegant, yet modest. She didn’t feel obliged to wear it but she preferred to. She spoke lovely Arabic, as well as lovely English. She wanted to return home but also felt welcomed in Jordan, given the circumstances. She didn’t want to be there but she had no choice. Unless you really want to count whether you want to live in a war zone or not a real choice. Let me help you on that one: it’s really not.

It wasn’t just Sarah in a hijab. At one point I was surrounded by native hijab-wearers talking to me. I felt even more uncomfortable.

The truth is I had nothing to feel uncomfortable about.

These were some of the nicest, most helpful, kindest people I had ever met. Hijab or no hijab. They went to such efforts to welcome me to their country. They showed me around their beautiful country. They opened my eyes to how the world really is. It’s filled with the ordinary. Which in itself is extraordinary. We think people are

different to us. They are. They have different cultures. Different skin. Different lovers. Yet, take all that away and our raw emotions are all the same. We all have insecurities, needs and desires.

These people spoke to me about the local issues that the conflict in Syria was causing as a by-product. They helped translate Arabic into English for me. They did everything without anything to gain from it. Pure kindness.

Yet, I can't change how I felt.

I can't help feeling uncomfortable at first.

Like you, I always assumed I grew up without many prejudices. I thought I could see beyond artificial things like a piece of cloth. That I accepted people for who they are.

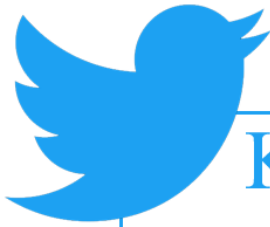
Boy, was I wrong.

I think part of the issue was that I didn't have any other reference points for women in hijabs other than the news. The news is, by definition, reported because it's the exception. Though we use it to form our expectations where life has failed to give us experience for the context of those environments, in which the news seeks only to inform us of these extreme exceptions.

Intellectually, I knew this. Most people are just normal, lovely, people. Still, physically, my body responded, ridiculously, as if it was in danger. That was one of the least threatening situations I've been in.

It just goes to show you have to recognise your prejudices before you can question them and then go on to challenge them.

A few days in and this trip was already worth it. I discovered prejudices I didn't know I had. I got to challenge, disprove and rid myself of these visceral prejudices. I hope. I'll strive to continue chipping away at my infinite levels of ignorance the best I can.



Kind Act #5

Location: Faisal, Egypt.

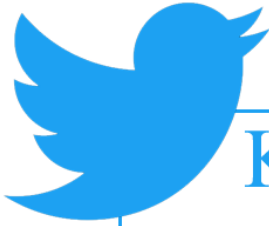
Tweet: **Egyptian locals take me into their home for a few nights and put on a feast! #KindActs**



Kind Act #6

Location: Cairo, Egypt.

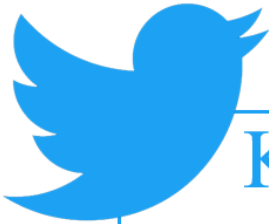
Tweet: **Local Egyptian friend stops me getting ripped off being a foreigner 100 times #KindActs**



Kind Act #7

Location: Cairo, Egypt.

Tweet: Invited into tomb at Egyptian pyramids out of bounds for being 'nice tourist' #KindActs



Kind Act #8

Location: Cairo, Egypt.

Tweet: Local kindly makes fabulous Egyptian meal for me! Becomes instant favourite #KindActs



Kind Act #9

Location: Cairo, Egypt.

Tweet: I am gifted some Egyptian paper with a lovely message to welcome me #KindActs

By JP Markey

WONDER #2

THE PYRAMIDS, EGYPT.





Arriving in Egypt was scary. The buses didn't have doors, the streets were messy and there was sand in the air. Not quite what I was used to. As is often the case though, just because something is different doesn't mean it's not going to be good. Doesn't mean it's not going to be interesting. And certainly doesn't mean it's not going to be fun!

Here's the snapshot introduction to the pyramids:

- Only “ancient wonder” still standing.
- Built around 2,500 BC. Beat that!
- Stands 146.7 metres or 481 ft tall.
- Has a Pizza Hut and block of apartments next door. No one ever shows that on their photos, do they!

Life Experience: Couchsurfing

I arrive in Egypt feeling uneasy. I've never before used Couchsurfing. Never before have I stayed at a stranger's house. Let alone in another country. Here goes nothing: I call my host, Amr, to find out where I can meet him. Unfortunately, he thinks I'm a telephone sales person and not understanding my English he tells me to go away and hangs up.

Not a good start.

Eventually, I get through to Amr again and we arrange to meet at the metro which hasn't yet been connected to the airport. As I will continually learn, timekeeping in Egypt is not a hobby. "Give me 5 minutes" can safely mean at least half an hour. I feel nothing short of a miracle will help the prospects for "long-term projects".

When I meet Amr, he is very tactile in directing me around. He offers to carry my bags, to which I feel uneasy about, and doesn't take no for an answer. As we alight one of the trains, I notice two men talking with one's hand on the other knee and the other's arm around his shoulder. Wasn't expecting Egypt to be so modern to be honest, and it turns out, from the people I have spoken to, they're not as Liberal as that suggested. Men are just really comfortable touching other men. I guess because of the lack of physicality with the opposite sex. Yet no one I met was comfortable with the idea of a homosexual. "It's just not natural" I heard many a times. The juxtaposition of it is all quite ironic.

As we continue to ride, Amr tells me his one "rule" for the time that I'm here. The first rule of Amr Club is that I should be his "brother" and, he adds, feel comfortable with him. Now I'm really starting to wonder: what on earth have I got myself in to.

I thought that would be the worst of it. As we approached closer, Amr goes on to tell me that where we are staying is a very "traditional" area of Egypt so I can see the "real Egypt". I start to

worry. Keep my wits about me and just try to be “careful and careless”. Anyway, I haven’t seen anything to make me think anything untoward might happen just yet. Amr, perhaps sensing my worry, says “if you feel unsafe where we’re staying, just say”.

Although said with good intentions, being a smaller build than even myself, it doesn’t help.

After the metro we hop on a “bus”. I only quote “bus” because the vehicle looks like it was from the last World War and doesn’t even have a door. You simply hop on, squeeze up tight and jump off when you’re passing your destination. It’s a unique experience and how crowded it is makes the lack of a door finally make sense.

We make it inside. The neighbourhood is a little bit raw but OK, I think. We get into the flat, it’s pitch black and as my eyes adjust to the darkness and sees a couple of flies, my mind compares it to a movie scene. There’s a TV on a chair not plugged in, some furniture and stuff laying around yet they’ve evidently tidied up for me. Still, have recently watched *Taken*, I wish I had counted the seconds between the lefts and right turnings on the bus. Just. In. Case.

As I settle in to the flat, we play a game of Pro Evolution Soccer on one of their laptops. One of them kindly puts together some food for the night and I take a selfie. Part of me just wants my friends to have a photo of these people. Just. In. Case.

When I go to bed, it’s 2am and I take a moment to reflect. These people have been nothing but kind to me. They put me up in their flat, have done nothing untoward to me and even bought me dinner. On top of that, they want to treat me as “family”.

Is that really so bad?

After a week in Egypt, I despise every second of my pessimistic outlook which made me suspicious of their kindness, made me judge their nice clean flat and made me question the safety of a friendly neighbourhood. I promise myself next time I will try to interpret things for what they are. Not just see what I project onto them.

“It is your
attitude
that
attracts
your tribe”



Kind Act #10

Location: Cairo, Egypt.

Tweet: **Hundreds of Egyptians have come over to say "welcome to Egypt" in Arabic #KindActs**



Kind Act #11

Location: Cairo, Egypt.

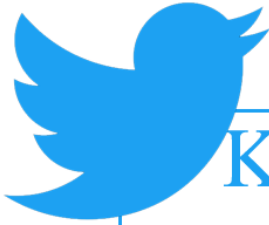
Tweet: **Egyptian shopkeeper let's me take a kip in the shut off bit of the airport as had 5 hour wait #KindActs**



Kind Act #12

Location: Istanbul, Turkey.

Tweet: **Smart, gorgeous woman gives couch to crash & writes out the best tour guides for me #Istanbul #KindActs**



Kind Act #13

Location: South Africa.

Tweet: Local shopkeeper let me crash for few hrs.
It's 6am. Pitch black. I don't fancy walking around
South Africa right now #KindActs



Kind Act #14

Location: South Africa.

Tweet: Lady met on the plane offers me a free room in
her apartment whilst she's out of town for a few nights
#SouthAfrica #KindActs



Kind Act #15

Location: South Africa.

Tweet: Guy gives me his jacket for free after I misplace both my jacket and jumper in a week #KindActs



Kind Act #16

Location: South Africa.

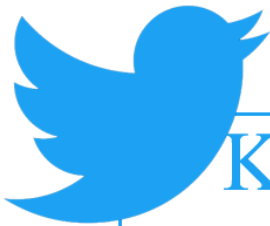
Tweet: Family friends' relative goes out of their way to meet me in the Wilderness and gives us the best company #KindActs



Kind Act #17

Location: South Africa.

Tweet: Feel like I made a new best friend who listened to everything I needed to say and put up with everything I needed to do #KindActs



Kind Act #18

Location: Melbourne, Australia.

Tweet: Thinking I'm homeless with my backpack a young child comes over with a donut he bought for me
#KindActs #Australia

Life Experience: Spontaneity

Seeing as I was in Australia it only seemed right to get a ticket and see the original Mad Max. The Mel Gibson epic, which has recently been revived.

You see, tonight, I'm going out of my comfort zone a bit and going to a lindy hop dance ball. Not only with dancing sessions but also with professional performances. I'm going with a lady called Dee, who I met in Edinburgh. She's delightful, fun and such a brilliant dancer.

So I'm amazed when my friend James agrees to come with me and on top of that another nice chap called Leroy is coming to try it out for the first time too. Now my nerves, given I've done lessons on and off for some time, seem silly.

Back to the line. Just before we get let in for the movie, I get chatting to three lovely girls in the queue. Then we just so happen to bump into each other on the way out too. I say "this is crazy, but I'm going to a dance thing if you're up for it".

Low and behold, they all agree to come!

It's a fun night. I'm still in thrall of their attitude to just go with what life brings and give it a go.

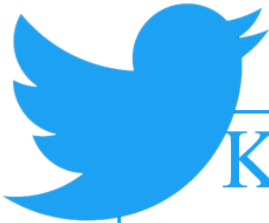
This is definitely an attribute I'm going to try to replicate going forward!



Kind Act #19

Location: Melbourne, Australia.

Tweet: First day in Aussie stranger takes me to watch the sunrise over Yarra River #KindActs #Australia



Kind Act #20

Location: Melbourne, Australia.

Tweet: Friends I met a couple of times treat me like a childhood friend in their hometown and show me round! Love these guys! #KindActs #Australia



Kind Act #21

Location: Tokyo, Japan.

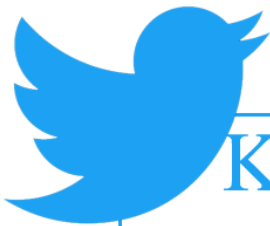
Tweet: Family friend spoils me with the best highlights of Tokyo, the best food and the best company. #KindActs #Japan



Kind Act #22

Location: Kyoto, Japan.

Tweet: Door man 'Peace' gives us free drinks for the night after we tell him we're travelling on a budget
#KindActs #Japan



Kind Act #23

Location: Osaka, Japan.

Tweet: DJ Ganna Ganna invites me as his British guest to Club Wax #KindActs #Japan

Japan



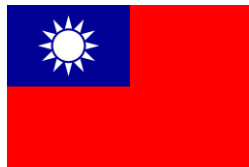
Population 127 million.
GDP: \$5 trillion.
Prime Minister: Shinzō Abe.

China



Population 1.4 billion.
GDP: \$11 trillion.
President: Xi Jinping.

Taiwan



Population 24 million.
GDP: \$32,000 per capita.
President: Tsai Ing-wen.

Hong Kong



Population 7.3 million.

GDP: \$320 billion.

Chief Executive: Leung Chun-ying.

Vietnam



Population 93 million.

GDP: \$202 billion.

President: Trần Đại Quang.

Cambodia



Population 16 million.

GDP: \$1,300 per capita.

Prime Minister: Hun Sen.



Kind Act #24

Location: Osaka, Japan.

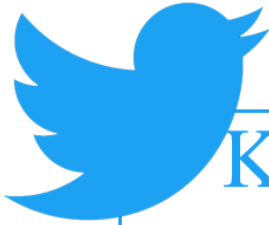
Tweet: Waitor at Cafe Sugar gives me free Japanese drinks because he knew it was my last day #KindActs #Japan



Kind Act #25

Location: Beijing, China.

Tweet: Bank of China businessman explains Chinese signs to me and then takes me to a traditional tea festival #KindActs #China



Kind Act #26

Location: Beijing, China.

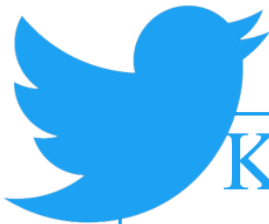
Tweet: Beautiful Chinese doctor takes me to the place that invented Peking Duck #KindActs #China



Teaching Time



Lock-in



Kind Act #27

Location: Chiayi, Taiwan.

Tweet: Entire village is so welcoming to me and Liss and we sleep inside a church also! #KindActs #Taiwan

By JP Markey

WONDER #3

THE GREAT WALL, CHINA.





China was full of surprises. For instance, you can walk up the wall but you can also toboggan down it. The rumours on the wall was that Trump had bought a part of it and so had McDonalds and Subway. So, who knows, maybe it will be called THE GREAT COMMERCIAL WALL next time I'm there!

Here's the snapshot introduction to THE wall:

- 21 million metres long, or 5,000 miles!
- However long it is, most tourists all visit the same parts.
- It was built during the Qin Dynasty to fight off invasions.

Life Experience: Make It Up

Given that I planned all of my flights in advance I guess I realised I like to have a bit of stability and know what's happening for at least the next few days.

Then I met Liss.

She asks me why I've planned it that way. Why I even have hostels booked for two days in advance.

I ask her why wouldn't I?

Because you can just make it up as you go along. She said that's what she's been doing and it's worked out fine so far (touch wood!).

So, we gave it a go. Thanks to making it up as we went along we ended up sleeping in a church (after teaching a bunch of kids in a local school!). I didn't plan anything for the next few days. Then I left towards Taipei and Liss said "Taipei?".

"Yes?"

"Ah, perfect. I'll send someone I met there a message. I'll sure they'll take you in tonight."

And with that it seems that sometimes the best plans come from having no plans at all.

As a great man once said:

"Life is what happens whilst your busy making other plans".



Kind Act #28

Location: Taipei, Taiwan.

Tweet: Look Me coffee shop let's me stay after close to use wifi and wait an hour for host to turn up
#KindActs #Taiwan



Kind Act #29

Location: Hong Kong.

Tweet: Lady kindly upgrades me for free to a private crystal Gondola #KindActs #HongKong



Kind Act #30

Location: Hong Kong.

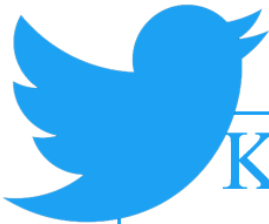
Tweet: Gentleman puts me up for two nights and even gives me a key so I can come and go as please
#KindActs #HongKong



Kind Act #31

Location: Vietnam.

Tweet: Every single person offered there seat to someone more needing in one packed bus journey
#KindActs #Vietnam



Kind Act #32

Location: Vietnam.

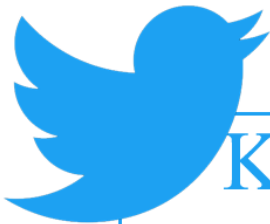
Tweet: Local let's me stay with family for a week and allows me to come to yoga classes #KindActs #Vietnam



Kind Act #33

Location: Vietnam.

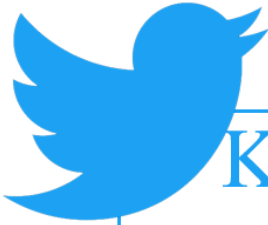
Tweet: Locals all welcome me into the country with help and smiles at all times #KindActs #Vietnam



Kind Act #34

Location: Vietnam.

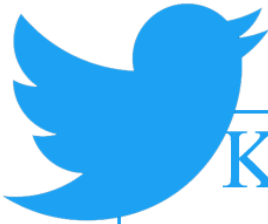
Tweet: Local family cooks me Vietnamese food and is so warm and friendly #KindActs #Vietnam



Kind Act #35

Location: Vietnam.

Tweet: Local I meet in a park shows me the best local spots and offers to be tour guide #KindActs #Vietnam



Kind Act #36

Location: Vietnam.

Tweet: After a 3 day train journey, couple allow me to use their hotel shower and keep me in good company for a day #KindActs #Vietnam



Kind Act #37

Location: Vietnam.

Tweet: Local comes to train station to wave me off #KindActs #Vietnam

Life Experience: Privileged

Couch surfing teaches you a lot. It shows you how a local person lives, eats and an insight into their daily routines.

When I went to Ho Chi Minh, I was amazed by the extra effort that went in at a grass root level to help teach local kids English. Their parents were at work during the day, they were unable to get into the local school so the locals stepped up.

Unfortunately, I couldn't bring myself to stay very long.

Here's what the chap had to say about that:

XXXXXX (Host)

Hồ Chí Minh, Vietnam

Jul 2016 – Negative

James seemly nice guy. If u host hom u must have UK comfortable bed and clear room as 5 start hotel. I very disappointed to host him!

James's response

It is true, I was very screamish to the cockroaches in the room and the ants on the bed. The work you do with teaching English is very good and I'm glad I had a chance to join in. Your family and hospitality was also lovely. Thanks.

Reflection

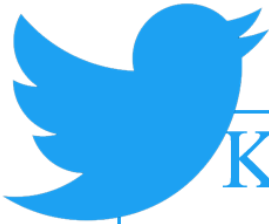
I didn't even last two nights. Yet, so many people live in these conditions day in and day out. It took a while for me to really realise how privileged I am for all the little things I take for granted. Even now, I couldn't do another night though!



Kind Act #38

Location: Vietnam.

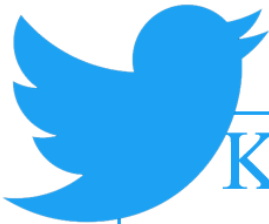
Tweet: Random chap I met lets me print off my Cambodian visa off his printer #KindActs #Vietnam



Kind Act #39

Location: Cambodia.

Tweet: Gentleman in Cambodia puts me up for three nights in my own room in his luxe flat #KindActs #Cambodia



Kind Act #40

Location: Cambodia.

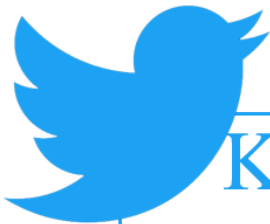
Tweet: One of the few Khmer Rouge survivors spends his morning chatting to me about his life
#KindActs #Cambodia



Kind Act #41

Location: Cambodia.

Tweet: Local expats treat me as an instant friend and arrange a boat trip followed by drinks
#KindActs #Cambodia



Kind Act #42

Location: Thailand.

Tweet: Local Thai puts me up for the week in awesome flat with pool and takes us to coolest bar
#KindActs #Thailand

Thailand



Population 69 million.

GDP: \$407 billion.

Prime Minister: Prayut Chan-o-cha.

Malaysia



Population 31 million.

GDP: \$296 billion.

Prime Minister: Najib Razak.

India



Population 1.3 billion.

GDP: \$2.3 trillion.

President: Ram Nath Kovind.

Ireland



Population 5 million.
GDP: \$294 billion.
President: Michael D. Higgins.

USA



Population 326 million.
GDP: \$19 trillion.
Prime Minister: Donald Trump.

Canada



Population 36 million.
GDP: \$1.53 trillion.
Prime Minister: Justin Trudeau.



Kind Act #43

Location: Thailand.

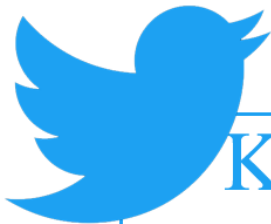
Tweet: Palace security guard sets up a hotspot on his phone when I ask for the nearest wifi #KindActs #Thailand



The OG Owls



Time to go to uni!



Kind Act #44

Location: Malaysia.

Tweet: After 2 day train, hostel owner gives me my own room & puts on a feast no charge #KindActs #Malaysia



Kind Act #45

Location: Malaysia.

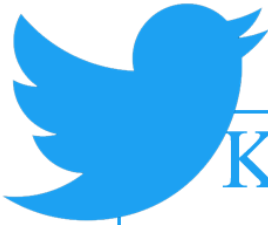
Tweet: Lovely local chap puts me up in his flat twice
#KindActs #Malaysia



Kind Act #46

Location: Malaysia.

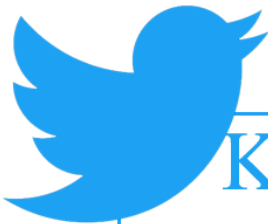
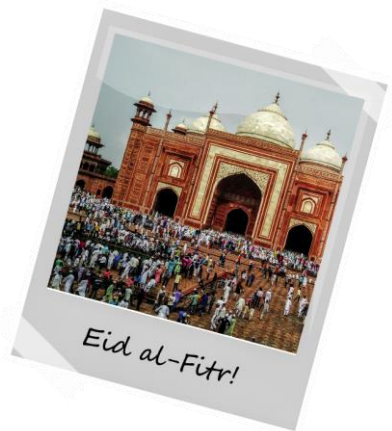
Tweet: Gorgeous Canadian woman injects so much joy
into my (extended) time in Malaysia #KindActs #Malaysia



Kind Act #47

Location: New Delhi, India.

Tweet: Lovely Indian lady shares with me her home made Indian bread moments after meeting her and says I have a good spirit #KindActs #India



Kind Act #48

Location: India.

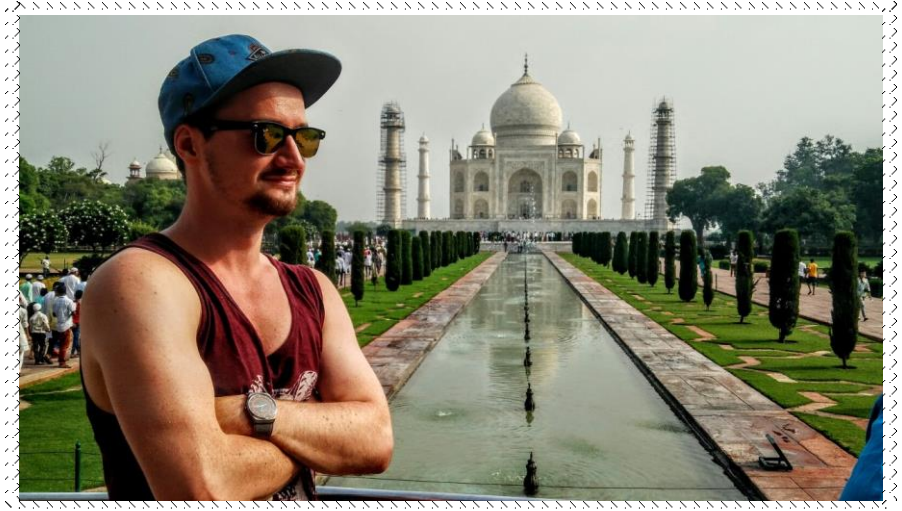
Tweet: Local guide refuses a generous tip. "I am happy with what I have. If you are happy with my tour, I am happy also" #KindActs #India

“Not all
those
who’re
alone are
lonely”

WONDER #4

TAJ MAHAL, INDIA.



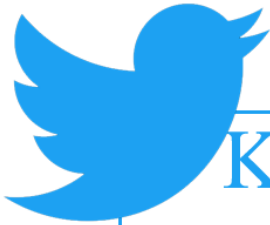


“What was just a glimpse at first. Through the gate which had 11 monuments on each side to signify that it took 22 years to build the Taj’s structure.”

I had the privilege of being at the Taj during the Eid al-fitr celebrations and it is a beautiful sight with a glorious atmosphere and being able to watch the morning prayers in action is a moment I do not wish to forget.

Here’s the snapshot introduction to the Taj:

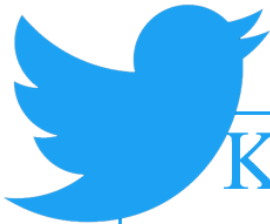
- Commissioned in 1632 as a symbol of love and the tomb to Mumtaz Mahal.
- Be prepared, around 7-8 million people visit each year.
- The marble changes colour depending on the light which gives incredible differences day and night.
- Some of the best hostels are situated in India!



Kind Act #49

Location: India.

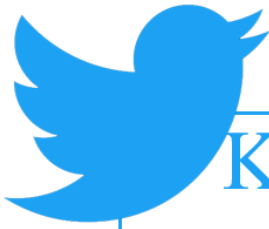
Tweet: Local spends time showing me how he makes block print patterned fabrics after I asked #KindActs #India



Kind Act #50

Location: Dublin, Ireland.

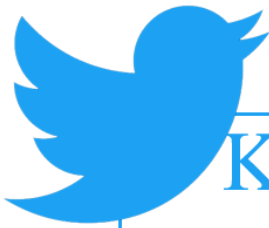
Tweet: Four guys in a pub agree to randomly go on a road trip around Ireland and then reunion in Scotland
#KindActs #Ireland



Kind Act #51

Location: New York.

Tweet: Beautiful lady who was just crossing the street showed us a magnificent night when we were new in town. #KindActs #NewYork



Kind Act #52

Location: New York.

Tweet: Guy gives me a free book to read for my journey home #KindActs #NewYork



Kind Act #53

Location: New York.

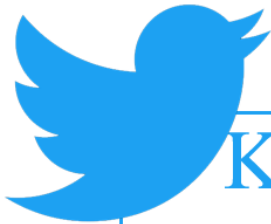
Tweet: Incredible woman offers for me to come with her to the US Open on the Subway #KindActs #NewYork



Kind Act #54

Location: New York.

Tweet: Sweet gentleman upgrades my seats at the Broadway Show 'Holiday Inn' #KindActs #NewYork



Kind Act #55

Location: New York.

Tweet: Sweet lady upgrades my seats at the women's NBA basketball #KindActs #NewYork



Kind Act #56

Location: New York.

Tweet: Security guard gets us best places to seat for Serena Williams and a US Open ball #KindActs #NewYork



Kind Act #57

Location: Canada.

Tweet: Friends made in China invite me to Montreal and treat me like a life long friend #KindActs #Canada

**“Before others
accept you for
who you are,
you must first
accept yourself
for who you are
and for who
you are not”**



Kind Act #58

Location: Canada.

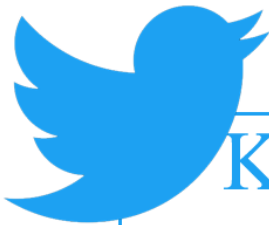
Tweet: Lovely chap puts me up for week during TIFF, goes away for weekend and leaves the flat to me!
#KindActs #Canada



Kind Act #59

Location: LA.

Tweet: The 'A' from Irelands BIGAM and his friends put me up in LA and show me a great time
#KindActs #LA



Kind Act #60

Location: Los Angeles.

Tweet: Marvin and Brooke take me camping and hiking at Joshua Tree! #KindActs #LA



Kind Act #61

Location: Los Angeles.

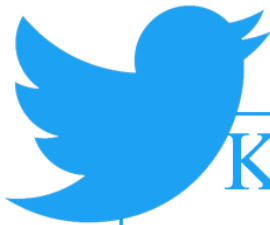
Tweet: Marvin takes me fishing and I catch my first fishy!
#KindActs #LA



Vegas trip



Initiation (Killer!)



Kind Act #62

Location: Los Angeles.

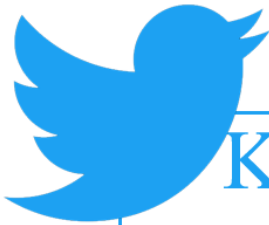
Tweet: One of Marvin's friends, Sam, puts me up for the
entire time I'm in LA #KindActs #LA



Kind Act #63

Location: Los Angeles.

Tweet: One of Marvin's friends, Bryant, gets up early to drive me to the airport! #KindActs #LA



Kind Act #64

Location: Mexico.

Tweet: Lovely people on lunch break help me order my tacos in Spanish & show me the local market to try new things #KindActs #Mexico



Kind Act #65

Location: Mexico.

Tweet: Super hospitable, generous, lady puts me up in my own room and shows me around Mexico City #KindActs #Mexico

Life Experience: Facing Fear

Cinnoti's taught me a very important lesson.

It's the things that scare me, that become the most rewarding once I do them.

I'm not great with heights. I'm not great with big drops. I'm not particularly great with water (bad experiences).

So, it would seem that climbing up to rock to a considerable height to plunge myself over the big drop into a pool of water wouldn't be my first choice of activities. That's very true. However, I was told I just had to go visit a Cinnoti. They are these natural swimming pools created in the earth by sinkholes into the limestone, I believe.

However they are created they offer you a chance to swim with the fishes in some of the most relaxing environments, in the cleanest of water and see straight through it. Not something to be missed.

When me and a group of the coolest people turned up to one, there's an opportunity to jump in from the height. Not one to back down to a crowd, I go about convincing everyone else why this is such a good idea. Turns out my persuasion was too good for my own good.

Then, we did it. Terrifying, yes. We still did it.

Everyone's grinning. We got it on video. Everyone high fives.

From this moment on, when something scares me for no good reason, I'm going to go for it. That's the one that builds character. That's the one that gives me satisfaction. That's the one I'm choosing from now on.



Kind Act #66

Location: Mexico.

Tweet: Smart, adorable, lovely, independent woman joins me and keeps me company for Cancun, Valladolid and Tulum! #KindActs #Mexico



Kind Act #67

Location: Mexico.

Tweet: Gang of awesome solo travelers come together for blast of a time and are generous, kind and sharing always #KindActs #Mexico

By JP Markey

WONDER #5

CHICHEN ITZA, MEXICO.





Travelling isn't just about what you see but also who you meet. I had such a great time at Chichen Itza and I owe a lot of that thanks to the people I was with.

With landmarks such as Chichen Itza, it's a great fuel for imagination. Given the size of it, it really allows you to immerse yourself in the environment and explore a different way of life.

Here's the snapshot introduction to Chichen Itza:

- Built by the Maya people from around 600 AD.
- The site is massive, with plenty to see and read about.

Mexico



Population 128 million.

GDP: \$8,000 per capita.

Prime Minister: Enrique Peña Nieto.

Peru



Population 32 million.

GDP: \$6,000 per capita.

President: Pedro Pablo Kuczynski.

Brazil



Population 208 million .

GDP: \$1.8 trillion.

President: Michel Temer.

Argentina



Population 44 million.
GDP: \$12,500 per capita.
President: Mauricio Macri.

Uruguay

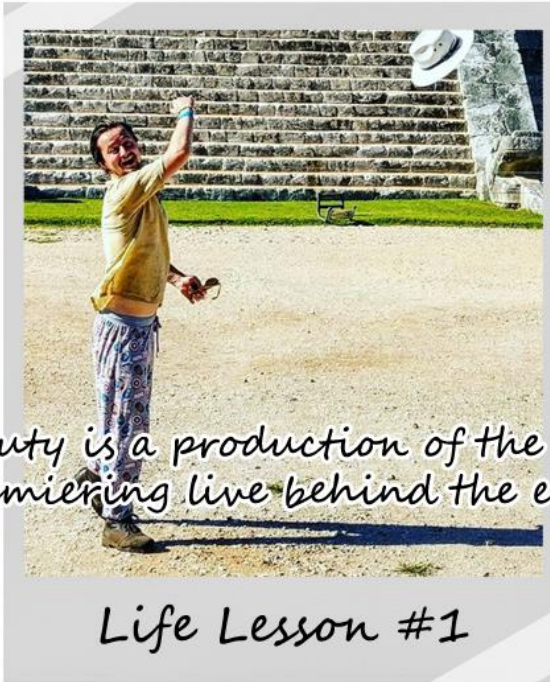


Population 3.5 million.
GDP: \$15,000 per capita.
President: Tabaré Vázquez.

Antarctica



Population 3,000.



Life Lesson: What Is Beauty?

"Beauty is a production of the mind premiering live behind the eyes"

I admit I have lived a very charmed life so far. I'm not #perfect. I'm #Big-headed. #Ambitious. #Jealous. #Obsessive. #Egocentric. #Materialistic.

I'm #Vain. Hell, I'm happy every time someone says I remind them of Dorian Gray and it's never been meant as a compliment. Even now, I'm all of those things but I've learnt a little about my ignorance also. I've learnt that, for one, your looks do not equal your attractiveness.

Good looks gets you a glance. Looks gets you a swipe-right. A meaningless hook up. It's certainly not a measure of how attractive you are. It's been the single biggest mistake believing otherwise in my short life thus far. Wishing I could be better looking to become more attractive.

It's false logic.

Real #Beauty is a production of the mind premiering live behind the eyes. If you are #fun to be around. You become #fabulous. If you make me #smile when I'm around you. You become more #seductive. If I accomplish more than I think I'm #capable of in your company I find you are more #captivating. If you're #sincere. You become more #sensual. Looks are simply a second glance. A swipe right. A meaningless hook up. Looks do not make you attractive in this life. When you're accepting of yourself and of others. That's when you are attractive. To me and to yourself. You can be hot, sweaty. In your pyjamas with boots on in the ridiculous heat. A hat which doesn't fit. With mosquito bites tarnishing any good looks you think you might have. You can be all that and still be attractive.

At least to me. .

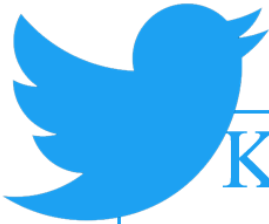
#LearnToLove #ThoughtBubble



Kind Act #68

Location: Mexico.

Tweet: Unknown star plugs in a mosquito repellent next to my bed after seeing how bitten I got!
#KindActs #Mexico



Kind Act #69

Location: Peru.

Tweet: Beautiful girl from across the room turns down other people to keep me company on the dance floor
#KindActs #Peru



Kind Act #70

Location: Peru.

Tweet: Other travellers share their repellent and water without me even asking on way to Machu Picchu
#KindActs #Peru



Kind Act #71

Location: Peru.

Tweet: Ukrainian lady helps me record a birthday video message for my little brother #KindActs #Peru



Kind Act #72

Location: Las Vegas (Flash Back).

Tweet: #FlashBack Generous man who paid 500USD for us to get a private booth in a club
#KindActs #LasVegas

By JP Markey

WONDER #6

MACHU PICCHU, PERU.





Sometimes travelling isn't about the destination, nor the people but rather the journey. That's what Machu Picchu is; a journey.

Taking everything from trains to colectivos to walking across huge terrains. It's not a journey for the light hearted but it is a journey worth taking.

Here's the snapshot introduction to Machu Pichu:

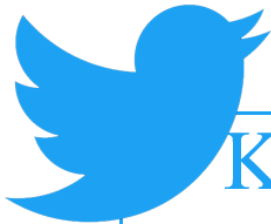
- It's almost 2,500 metres or 8,000 feet above sea level. Be prepared for the change in altitude.
- Llama's will equally be enjoying the sights alongside you!
- Most famous Inca civilisation land mark.



Kind Act #73

Location: Brazil.

Tweet: Becca opens up a whole new world of travel for me in the Pantanal
#KindActs #Brazil



Kind Act #74

Location: Argentina.

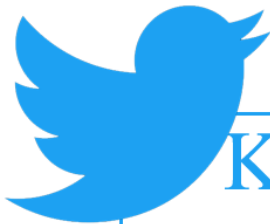
Tweet: Alan and Steph organise a day out to Argentina footy for us!
#KindActs #Argentina



Kind Act #75

Location: Argentina & Uruguay.

Tweet: Gorgeous lady from Mexico flies to Buenos Aires for #Reunion, dancing tango and going to #Uruguay #KindActs



Kind Act #76

Location: Argentina.

Tweet: Super sisters from peru give me a final send off in La Plata #KindActs #Argentina

By JP Markey

WONDER #7

CHRIST THE REDEEMER, BRAZIL.





Sometimes the biggest wonder isn't the wonder, either. My favourite memory of going to see Christ was actually right at the start of the journey. Down in the national park where the climb to this strange heaven like area in the clouds begins provides a chance to walk inside a tree and experience an aquarium that has been installed INTO the tree.

The strangest part of all is when you arrive to the top. You are then required to take some escalators up, into the clouds to go visit Christ. It reminds me of The Simpsons for sure!

Here's the snapshot introduction to the redeemer:

- Created by a French sculpture and a Brazilian engineer.
- Work started in 1922.
- The position of open arms is a symbol of peace.

By JP Markey

KIND ACTS

EVEN FROM ANTARCTICA





Kind Act #77

Location: Home.

Tweet: Wonderful family meets me at #London airport.

Perfect end to a perfect trip

#KindActs #777

By JP Markey

KIND ACT #78

OVER TO YOU



Kind Act #78

Location: _____

Tweet: _____

#KindActs

You can tag me @JamesPaulMarkey

Letter to my not-so Younger Self

James, Jambo, JP (whatever you call yourself at this moment in time),

How's life?

Just a smile? That's how I thought you'd answer.

After all, you're 23 years old. Your life is pretty bloody awesome, right? You've been a Store Manager for close to 5 years now. You're not in debt, in fact, you've earned and saved more money than you thought was possible at this age. You've worked hard, in fact, often for free. You've got lucky, in fact, you were born pretty lucky.

You've finally sold your flat which continually flooded and caused untold misery for years. Yet, it showed you how much love and support would come pouring in from family and friends around you. You forgone university. Yet, you've hired graduates to work for you. You "missed out" on a degree. Yet, you're paying your own way upfront to study in the evenings and weekends to get that degree with the Open University. I know you're not particularly impressed by your achievements, nor will you take any compliments given to you seriously, but I am still impressed. I want you to know that. You're on track. Well done.

Opening up a newly refitted flagship store is going to be an exciting, exhilarating but exhausting challenge for you. Don't worry, you'll accomplish everything you need to. You'll get to work with some inspirational staff that are staying on. You'll take some recruitment decisions and employ people that astound everyone, some including themselves, in their abilities. You won't be surprised. They're capable of achieving anything. You'll reaffirm to yourself that life doesn't need to be hard for no reason. There's no need for callous gossip. There's no need for rudeness. There's certainly no need for one of your superiors to be arrogant, condescending and hurtful to you to achieve the best out of you. Still, even that, has its upshot. You'll learn to stand up for yourself. To your team and later in the face of authority. It'll make you more self-aware. You'll realise the affect that any of your own poorly considered conversations can have on other people. That's an important lesson. Don't be bitter about how you learnt it. It's just important that you did before you're in a real

leadership role and you will be. Plan for it. Be ready.

Very soon, you'll get a phone call trying to get you to interview for a job in Saudi Arabia. You'll get the job and then be brutally ghosted at the final moment. It hurts but it doesn't matter. Even knowing this, still entertain that call. It will be the catalyst to a unique set of decisions which will change your life forever. You'll realise a lot soon.

You'll realise you love your job but you're not learning anything new. You're passionate but you have no purpose in what you do. You're motivated but you are not moving towards something. You have great experiences in life but not exploring anything new. Everyone thinks you have it all but you're missing what they do.

They accept themselves for them and you need to accept you for you.

You can have it all and you WILL have it all. Less money perhaps but you'll place more value on yourself. Accept that life's balance sheet is made up of more than just fictional currency. Keep that motivation to earn lots of money, it will indeed secure your future, but be sure to give the same weight, if not more, to new life experience, new loves and new laughter. It's important. You'll learn that soon enough.

I know your only fear in life is whether you'll ever feel anything again. Even now, you've only admitted that to one person but, don't panic, I've just admitted it to the world for you. You can't entirely relate to anyone else you've met. When the future looks insecure and you feel insecure looking at it. You don't understand how people with less than you can be so relaxed. You want to achieve so much before you can relax. There's no time for distractions. So; Why gossip. Why love. Why cry. In fact, you've only cried three times up to this point. Visiting your sister's grave. Saying your final goodbye to your 'mum-mum'. Waking up floating three inches above the ground, alone in your flat, for the umpteenth time. There's plenty of other times you feel ashamed, regret and remorse for having had no emotion at all.

It's OK. You're not perfect. You're not broken though, either.

Your fear is not unfounded, but it is unnecessary. You will meet

people who allow you to say things you've never spoken before. You will do things you've never done before that will unlock the spontaneity in you going forward. You will experience things that will show you your subconscious prejudices that you shoulder, meanwhile blowing them away to lighten your load.

Don't worry. You will cry, too. You will cry meeting the survivor from the Khmer rouge in Asia. You will cry over the child that buys you a donut thinking you are homeless in Australia. You will cry over all the things you were ashamed not to cry about in years past. Furthermore, you will cry reliving so many memories, good or bad, on every continent, in your own, personal, private projection of the past because you will be remembering just how bloody awesome your life has been every, single, day. In fact, you'll be wishing you weren't such a crier some days! Who would've thought it..... Not you!

Just be sure to keep a journal of everything. I look forward to rereading our exploits in years to come.

Looking back, you'll realise that your immaturity, insecurity and insurmountable gullibility have led you to develop bad habits. Be honest. You've not always respected women 100%. You've not always stood up for people who couldn't stand up for themselves. You've unwittingly upset people. It's not great that's its all happened but what's great is that it will change. Which means you will still have a lot of making up to do for your missteps. The point of life is to have an impact. Even if only for a momentary flash. So do.

Knowing you, you probably stopped reading when I asked "How's life?" and I'm glad. If you read this it could change the course of events. That would be the first real regret I would have in life.

Your biggest supporter,
James.

P.s James. If you did read this far be sure to invest everything you have in Brew Dog when you move to Scotland and sell it a couple of years later. Trust me on this one. I have a good feeling about it. I just wish I told you this before I asked "how's life?". Shucks.

By JP Markey

By JP Markey

CHECK OUT
JPMARKEY.CO.UK

GET IN CONTACT

JAMES @ JPMARKEY.CO.UK