



UNDER EMBARGO – MARCH 8 2021

MARCH 8 2020 – Three new London day tours led by women who have overcome challenging circumstances will give travellers a unique insight into the lives of immigrant communities in the capital.

[Intrepid Travel](#), a global leader in responsible travel, has teamed up with social enterprise Women in Travel (CIC) to give three women the life-changing opportunity to take their first steps in the tourism industry and embark on a career as tour guides.

The women, who are from Ethiopia, Morocco and Albania, will share stories about the customs and traditions of their home country and their ever-evolving influence on the thriving immigrant communities in Shepherd's Bush, Kingston and Southwark.

These new Urban Adventures tours will connect visitors with local people to uncover their stories and see London through a different lens. Entitled '**Ethiopian Flavours in Shepherd's Bush**', '**Balkan Tastes and Culture on the South Bank** and '**Moroccan tea ceremony and dessert (virtual)**', food and drink are central to the three tours, with visitors taking part in a traditional Ethiopian coffee ceremony, trying delicious Balkan kofte and learning how to make the perfect Moroccan mint tea.

As part of this initiative, the team from Intrepid and [Women in Travel](#), the social enterprise dedicated to empowering women and using tourism as a force for good, have All three women were previously unemployed and approached Women in Travel to gain the training and support needed to eventually find economic independence.

Intrepid is known for having local leaders with vast knowledge of a destination and has worked with these women to train them to these impeccable standards while ensuring that as they embark on a career in tourism, they feel empowered to inject their own personality and passion for their local community into the tours that they will deliver.

As travel's largest B Corp, Intrepid is committed to increasing employment opportunities for women in the travel industry, using tourism as a force for good and supporting local communities. In 2019, the company achieved its aim of doubling the number of tour leaders it works with globally, and it is working towards a series of further gender goals.

Zina Bencheikh, managing director EMEA at Intrepid Travel, said: "Women in Travel shares many of our values at Intrepid Travel, particularly our belief that we cannot have a sustainable travel industry without female empowerment. I am very proud to launch these tours for

International Women's Day and hope that people will enjoy experiencing a new side of London after many months of lockdown."

Klaudija Janzelj, managing director of Urban Adventures, added: "It's been a privilege for our team to work with Ella, Sefanit and Kaoutar on their journey to becoming tour guides. Their passion for the culture and flavours of their home country and appreciation of their new home London is truly infectious."

Alessandra Alonso, founder of Women in Travel, said: "Women in Travel is proud of and inspired by these trailblazer women, who arrived in the UK with little money, limited English and no connections. Yet through sheer determination and hard work they have been able to forge a career in this great industry. We are grateful to Intrepid for their continuous partnership and hope that more travel and hospitality businesses will follow their lead."

Ethiopian Flavours in Shepherd's Bush (2.5 hours, £82, departures from May 29)

Join Sefanit Mengiste, 36, who arrived in London from Ethiopia at age 14, for a walking tour to explore Ethiopian food and culture. Shepherd's Bush in West London is home to a thriving Ethiopian community, with many shops and cafés and even hair salons dedicated to Ethiopian culture. You'll experience the Ethiopian ritual of making and drinking coffee, try the aromatic spices used in the cuisine and try a delicious juice known for its medicinal qualities.

Sefanit said: "Ethiopia is a big part of my life. The colours, smells and community of my childhood are still with me and in me. In Ethiopia, food is everything and I can think of nothing better than sharing my culture with visitors to London."

Balkan Tastes & Culture in London's South Bank (2.5 hours, £89, departures from May 29)

Join Ella Hoxhaj, 30, who arrived in London from a rural and impoverished community in Albania two years ago, for an exploration of Balkan flavours and culture. Learn about the shared traditions of the Balkan countries and the similarities and variances between them while strolling along South Bank. Discover surprising Balkan cultural connections to sites like the Tate Modern and St. Paul's Cathedral.

Ella said: "I started in rural Albania as someone who had little chance of studying and working or doing much else outside their village and household. I am proud that I can now take control of my life and make it the one I was dreaming of as a young child. People here know a little about the Balkans, but I'm looking forward to sharing more about our traditional and culture."

Moroccan Tea Ceremony (virtual) (45 mins, £19, departures from April 19)

Learn about Moroccan life and culture with an interactive, online tea ceremony. Join guide Kaoutar Hafsi, 31, as she virtually welcomes you into her Kingston home. Together, you'll make a Laakda, a traditional almond biscuit eaten with mint tea, using ingredients you can find in your city. Once you've finished baking, enjoy your treat with a traditional mint tea.

This tour will initially take place online initially, with in-person home cooking tours in Kaoutar's home to take place later in the year, Covid-19 restrictions permitting.

Kaoutar said: "When I came to live in London, I missed the relationships I had in Morocco - family, shopkeepers, everyone. This tour is about connection and togetherness experienced through Moroccan traditions."

All three tours are on sale from March 8 at urbanadventures.com. 15% of the tour price will be donated to Women in Travel, which reinvests 100% of profits into the training and mentoring of underprivileged women like the ones leading the tours.

For more information please contact:

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Pictures are available to download at

<https://intrepidgroup.bynder.com/share/E799901E-8129-4FBA-BDC2C5E62F5A7C31/>

About Intrepid

Independently owned by the founders and staff of Intrepid Travel, Intrepid Group is a collection of three tour operator brands and 25 destination management companies united by the vision of Changing the Way People See the World. For more than 30 years, Intrepid has been taking small groups to travel the local way, on real life experiences that give back to the places and people we visit. As this style of travel has caught on, Intrepid has grown and in 2019 offered more than 2,700 trips to more than 130 countries and on all seven continents. We cater for all ages, budgets, and appetites for adventure through Intrepid Travel, Peregrine Adventures and Urban Adventures. Globally renowned as a leader in responsible travel, in 2018 Intrepid became the world's largest travel business to be certified B-Corp, joining a growing community of businesses looking beyond the bottom line. Our not-for-profit, [The Intrepid Foundation](#), has raised over AUD \$10M for more than 130 charities around the world.

About Women in Travel

Women in Travel (CIC) started life as a gender focused platform at World Travel Market flagship event in London in 2014. Growing successfully from then onwards, in 2017 it was incorporated as a social enterprise dedicated to empowering women through employability and entrepreneurship in travel tourism and hospitality. Its vision is to become a catalyst for sustainability by placing women at the heart of an industry which is inherently attractive to females and growing at a fast pace. It is the brain-child of Alessandra Alonso, who has been recognised as a trail-blazer when it comes to gender diversity in the industry and who has supported women in maximising their opportunity in the travel, tourism and hospitality (TTH) industry for well over a decade, originally through Shine & the Shine Awards. Women in Travel partners with employers to provide the first Women Returners service through which the industry can access a pool of marginalised but often highly skilled women who are eager to get back to work. Women in Travel also runs entrepreneurship focused events, mentoring and networking, supporting start ups and early stage female entrepreneurs and those wanting to start a business, particularly of BAME background.

For more information about Women in Travel, visit www.womenintravelcic.com.