

**PAINT, PAPER  
& GOING PLACES**



# **PAINT, PAPER & GOING PLACES**

**A GUIDE TO CREATIVE  
TRAVEL JOURNALING**

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Hoekstra**



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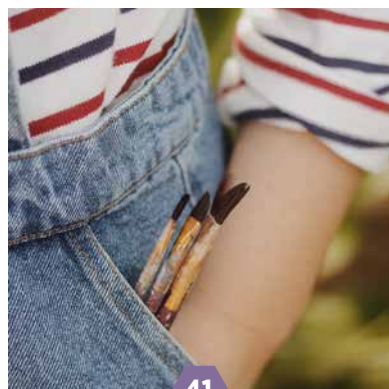
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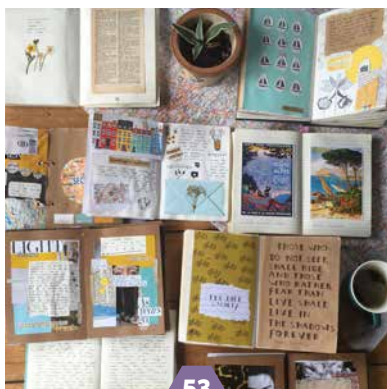
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## PREFACE

Dear reader,

Perhaps you've already created a travel journal before, or maybe you have attempted to at some point. Capturing stories in texts, images, or sketches is of all times, and it has always been an outlet for me as well.

Since 2017, I've been sharing my creative journals online. My portfolio has grown into a collection of keepsakes, from glossy photos paired with pressed flowers to gouache paintings of landscapes and buildings.

This book is for anyone who wishes to document their travel stories in their own unique way. For travellers who like to create as they go, but also for those who only find time to journal after their return. It doesn't matter whether you use pen, paper, glue, or paint. I prefer gouache paint, and most tutorials are based on it, but in your travel journal, what matters most is that you enjoy the process as well as the result. Journaling is about experimenting, stepping away from your phone, and fully embracing the present moment. The key is finding a technique and routine that feels right for you and makes you happy.

On my social media (*@mereljournals*), I hope to continue inspiring you with my illustrated travel diaries. Please, feel free to share your creations with me. For now, I wish you lots of fun observing and capturing your travels on paper. I hope you get to explore and bring your paints and papers while going places.

Love,  
Merel





# Travelling solo

Travelling at my own pace, doing whatever I felt like, and meeting new people were just a few of the reasons I had always longed to embark on a longer solo trip. So, in April 2023, I left my job, packed my bags, said goodbye to friends and family, and travelled to my first destination: Portugal. From there, my journey took me through Spain, Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, and Montenegro.

Of course, I was nervous. Being alone didn't scare me; I enjoy spending time by myself. In my home country, the Netherlands, I regularly venture out solo, whether it's visiting museums, wandering through town, or enjoying lunch on my own. But doing the same things in unfamiliar countries where I didn't speak the language felt like stepping into a whole new level of discomfort.

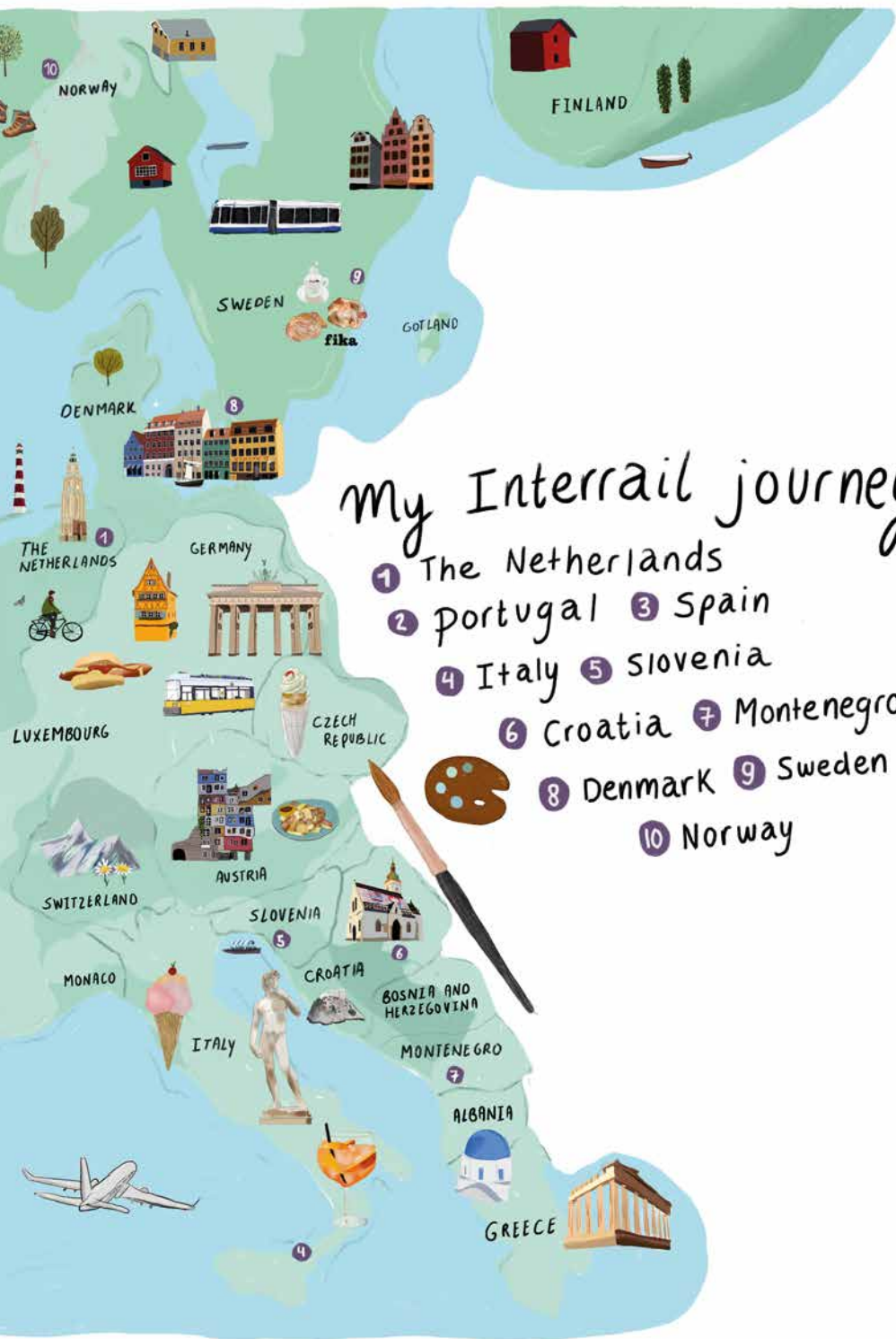
As it turned out, my worries were unfounded. Whenever I needed a break from travelling or didn't feel like venturing out, I found solace in my travel journal. I wrote about my experiences and printed photos with my portable mini printer, sticking them onto the pages. I saved receipts, train tickets, and museum passes. With my paints and sketchbook, I felt just like Van Gogh, spending hours in cafés or on location, capturing the most beautiful scenes on paper. These moments alone gave me time to truly unwind. Portraying the places I visited in this way gave my journey a deeper sense of purpose.

No matter how beautiful all these destinations are, after a while, they begin to blur together. That's why I found it so rewarding to observe more closely, using pens, brushes, and paper. This practice not only helps you appreciate the places more, but also preserves the memories in a unique way. It doesn't matter if you're working with a pen, a paintbrush, or glue; what matters is that you're preserving memories that might otherwise get lost among the thousands of photos on your phone, as I believe these memories deserve more space.



Name: Merel  
Djamila





# my Interrail journey

- 1 The Netherlands
- 2 Portugal
- 3 Spain
- 4 Italy
- 5 Slovenia
- 6 Croatia
- 7 Montenegro
- 8 Denmark
- 9 Sweden
- 10 Norway



THIS SUMMER I'VE  
SPEND MY SWEET TIME  
RUNNING AWAY  
FROM THE PAST /  
IN THE AFTERNOON:  
I COLLECT POSTCARDS  
FROM PLACES I'VE  
NEVER BEEN /  
AT MIDNIGHT:  
I DESTROY TIME  
BY OVERTHROWING THE  
CLOCKS  
IN THE HALLWAY /  
I AM HUNGRY FOR  
THE FLESH IN WHICH  
I WILL GROW: BUT  
LIKE A BUTTERFLY,  
I WILL RECOVER  
FROM THE HURT AND  
PAIN I HAD TO UNCOVER /



AFTER  
GOLD  
AT  
AFAND  
METTY  
KITE  
BVM  
HO WILL

## CHAPTER 1

# WHY START A TRAVEL JOURNAL?

Keeping a travel journal – whether during or after your trip – offers a great way to reflect on your experiences, the people you meet, and the moments you cherish, while shaping and preserving memories in a meaningful way. Can you think of a greater gift than dusting off one of your journals after several years, flipping through its pages, and reliving your memories?

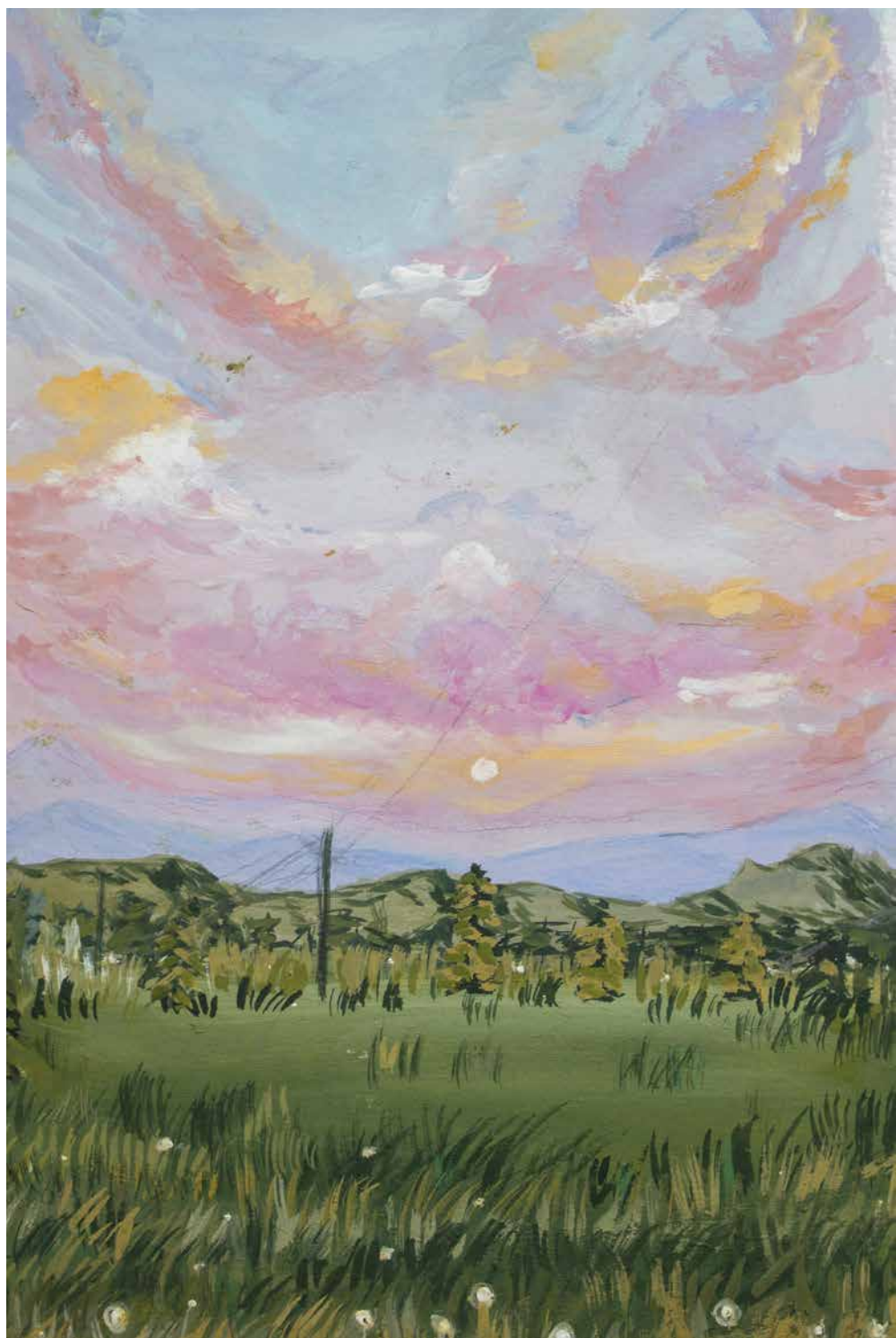


# Reflecting through ink

As a child, I always kept diaries because I felt the need to reflect on my day. When nothing special happened, I sometimes made up my own stories with fictional characters. I was never very consistent, though, and would sometimes forget to write for days.

But during holidays, I would collect receipts and tickets. If I didn't manage to stick them into my notebook that same evening, I made sure to do it the following day. At the time, I didn't realise I was actually journaling, but as it turns out, I had been doing it all along. My twin sister and I were both fascinated by capturing moments through photography. In 2011, she started her first blog to share her photos, while I remained dedicated to keeping a paper journal and reflecting on my life through ink.





# The power of paper

When you consider that you are constantly receiving and processing new stimuli, it is not surprising that you might feel overstimulated from time to time. On social media, you may scroll through entertaining videos for hours, in town you are confronted with countless advertisements, and at school or at work you might be constantly interrupted by classmates or colleagues.

As a place becomes more familiar, chances are you're filtering out most stimuli and only notice sounds, smells, and sights that are out of the ordinary. However, when you're in a new, unfamiliar setting – such as when travelling – you're far more aware of everything around you. As a result, you may become overstimulated.

Journaling can help you focus on the moment and take a break from the background noise, but its benefits go beyond that. For one, keeping a journal provides space for self-reflection. Writing about your thoughts allows you to explore your emotions and mindset, fostering a deeper understanding of yourself. Reflecting on challenges, fears, or difficult experiences can offer relief and contribute to mental well-being and clarity. Additionally, writing down your aspirations and goals can help you stay organised and motivated during hectic periods. Ultimately, journaling teaches you to appreciate the small things and cultivate a positive mindset.



# Disconnect to reconnect



# Embracing paper over screens

Have you always been the kind of traveller who likes to see as much as possible in a short amount of time? Or do you prefer beach holidays to escape from your busy life? Either way, a travel journal is an excellent tool for documenting your adventures. A traditional paper journal encourages you to focus and stay present in the moment. Chances are, you already spend enough time staring at screens in your everyday routine anyway.

As holidays are supposed to be relaxing, it is an excellent time to put away your phone and truly take in your surroundings. Recording them in a travel journal helps you become a better observer, because you must take in some details to draw or paint something. Journaling also slows you down: it simply takes more time to draw or paint than it does to snap a photo, and you'll end up with a physical memento of your trip that you can still flip through years later.

Travel journals are much more personal than printed photo books, as they are uniquely you. As you build your collection of travel journals, you will also shape your history and development as an artist, improving your drawing and painting skills with each one along the way.

Do you want to start a travel journal, but don't have a holiday planned? Go out and explore your own neighbourhood. Take a sketchbook, pencil or pen, pick a building or location, and just begin!



# amsterdam

A CITY OF LOST TALES

ONCE IN A WHILE I LIKE TO CATCH THE TRAIN TO VISIT AMSTERDAM. TO GET LOST IN THE SMALL STREETS AND ADMIRE ITS ARCHITECTURE. THIS TIME, I ALSO VISITED TWO NEW ART EXHIBITIONS IN THE RIJKSMUSEUM AND STEDELIJK MUSEUM.



# KLOPPENBURG

I AM NOT THE BIGGEST FAN OF AMSTERDAM. IT IS CROWDED, SMALL LIKE VIENNA AND A BIT OVERHEATED (LOTS OF OTHER DUTCH CITIES BUT THE DICHTELIJKE IS AMAZING.

## THINGS TO DO IN AMSTERDAM

- VAN GOGH MUSEUM
- DE STRAATJES
- GET SNACKS ON THE MARKET (SINGAPOOR 1)
- BOOK MARKET
- ON



Street lamp 100



## CHAPTER 2

# THE ART OF OBSERVING

In this day and age, it's not uncommon to feel rushed – even while relaxing. Think about how little time you spend standing in front of a painting at a museum, or how quickly you work through the list of the most important sights and landmarks during a city trip. What would happen if you took more time? Allow me to explain the magic of observing.