

## Sebastian Copeland, Photographer and Explorer: Developing Your Conservation Conscience

INDAGARE GLOBAL CONVERSATIONS | 2.03

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### Melissa Biggs Bradley

Hi there, and welcome to Indagare's Global Conversations. A podcast about how traveling the world shapes our lives and our perspectives. I'm Melissa Biggs Bradley of Indagare, a company I founded on the belief that how you travel matters. I'm sitting down in conversation with some of the most inspiring and innovative people I've met while on the road. They will share stories about their travels and how they lead lives of passion and purpose. Welcome to the conversation.

Sebastian Copeland is the kind of person whose idea of a sabbatical is spending a season on a scientific research icebreaker in the Antarctic Peninsula. He's a person of many passions talents, and avocations. He's an incredible endurance, explorer and athlete. He's been to the North pole to commemorate the Centennial of periods expedition. Crossed Antarctica via kites and skis setting polar records along the way and traversed Australia's Simpson desert on foot, a 400 mile Trek over terrain that is home to more than 90 varieties of snakes. He's also a phenomenal photographer, filmmaker and writer, known for his documentaries Into the Cold and Across the Ice: The Greenland Victory March. His latest book, and Antarctica: Waking Giant was just awarded the equivalent of the Oscars for photography. Put his talents and his trips together, and you have a passionate climate advocate, who's dedicated his life to pursuing daring adventures in the service of environmental awareness. Today, I'm excited to share a conversation with you that I had with Sebastian about the intersection of travel science, art and ethics. In the episode, we discuss the photographer's role when it comes to bearing witness and recording massive issues like climate change, why he fell in love with extreme destinations like the North and South poles in the first place. And how wisdom from the scientist and author Carl Sagan rings true for him in his work and his life today.

So to start off, um, I'd love to actually start with how you got into travel and photography. Um, was it conservation that inspired you to love travel, or was it the travel that inspired you to want to pick up a camera and become an advocate for conservation?

### Sebastian Copeland

Thank you, Melissa. And thanks for having me here today. Um, so yes, my ... the start, if you will, uh, was, uh, characteristic only if, um, uh, if ... because my grandfather was an avid outdoors man and, um, after living in India, uh, for, uh, a few decades, my mother was born in Calcutta and he, uh, he was an avid hunter actually whe- when he was in India. And then in midlife traded his gun for a camera and never shot an animal again. And, uh, and then proceeded to, uh, to do some photo, um, safaris in Botswana and Tanzania and places like that. And after moving away from India at the end of the Raj, they, uh, settled in Swaziland in South Africa. And so I did my first safaris with my grandfather when I was, uh, 12 and 13, and that's when I took my first photographs. And lo and behold, and suddenly unbeknownst to me at the time, um, it became a bit of that appendage. Um, the camera was just a way to articulate, um, my views of surroundings and whatnot. And, uh, I didn't really think that this was gonna be a calling. Um, it just became more, uh, as I like to say it, I didn't choose photography in many respects it chose me.

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**Melissa Biggs Bradley**

And so how did you go from being, you know, somebody young and interested, obviously in photography, um, to- to really making it a career?

**Sebastian Copeland**

So I was ... I remained, uh ... but I was very curious, uh, in college and, uh, and I studied, um, a variety of different, uh, disciplines that ended up with a double major. And, um, I was photographing while I was in school and, um, and- and- and filming as well, actually. And, uh, and I was actually hired while I was still in college to, uh, to- to do some professional work, which turned out to be much more lucrative than the small jobs that I was doing while I was in college. And rather than go for a PhD, I ended up, uh, getting out of college and- and starting to work commercially as, um, as both a photographer, um, and a, um, and a commercials' director. So I worked, uh, commercially, even though I had studied, um, I was very enamored with, uh, I mean, I studied glaciology and climatology as well as some other disciplines, but I, you know, I love cosmetology as well. And, uh, but I ... my life sort of took me down the- the path of Hollywood and Madison Avenue, if you will. And, um, it was a very gratifying and suddenly lucrative, uh, life at that time. But, um, I had been a star athlete in school and, um, and I maintained a high level of athleticism, uh, throughout college and, uh, and beyond. And, uh, about, uh, almost 15 years into my, uh, career in advertising, um, shooting movie posters and celebrities and whatnot, I was, um, educated on the adverse effects of climate change, and it really resonated with my, uh, with my childhood aspirations to be a- a polar explorer. I- I got to read, um, you know, Jack London and, uh, of course, most of Jules Verne and all the adventure and, um, and, uh, biography literature from, let's say, uh, you know, Amundsen and Scott and Shackleton, et cetera. And so from having, uh, you know, really an interesting, continued studied in glaciology because I- I kept a really strong interest in the topic, I started to see in the mid 90s, that they would be an interesting confluence of both my interest in climatology, at least the budding interest, but interest in the ice, uh, and my aspirations to go to the ice as an explorer, and finally bringing photography as, uh, as the third pillar to my house, if you will. And I had an opportunity to, uh, to explore the, uh, the Arctic regions. And then eventually I was able to go and spend a season on a scientific research icebreaker on the Antarctica Peninsula, as a sabbatical, if you will. And, um, I just never looked back.

**Melissa Biggs Bradley**

On how does being a photographer change your perspective as a traveler, because you obviously started noticing that very early on, but it- it- it does change the way you look at things and experience things, doesn't it?

**Sebastian Copeland**

It really does. I mean, photography is- is incredible medium, uh, like all creative mediums, but if that's your chosen with fresh and, uh, there's such a multiplicity of- of fields that you get to explore. You know, I'm fun to say that just like music, you know, there's only two types of music it's either good or bad. And I think in sort of photography, um, you have the same, uh, same dynamic in genres. 'Cause I did a lot of different things. I- I shot people and portraits and products and, uh, and of course I was enamored with landscape since my early days, as I mentioned earlier, shooting with a plastic Kodak, a film camera in the 70s. And, um, you know, for me, photography has always been just about finding something that moves you and landscaper always did that. And so it's not so much that I felt, you know, this sort of passionate desire to photograph my surroundings as much as I felt this was a natural, uh, you know, extent of- of my, of my own view of things and, and being

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able to capture it and actually look at it for myself and relive these experiences. So traveling and photography, I think, you know, really a natural bedfellows and never something more so than in today's age of- of, you know, technology when that, you know, the barriers have fallen to the simplicity of just pressing a button. And, you know, and- and I'm not a snob specifically when it comes to photography. Obviously this is, you know, the iPhone or the equivalent is not my chosen mode of- of photographing, uh, you know, on the road. Although I do have two little girls, so I'm not suggesting that I'm not making ample use of my- my- my device, but, um, but in terms of travel, you know, the- the- the weight of photography, it is also a way to relive those experiences and to be reimbursed into the, uh, the emotions and the, you know, the beauty, uh, and the experiences that you've had.

## **Melissa Biggs Bradley**

And was there a sort of aha moment for you, Sebastian, when you said, okay, I ha- ... I can use my skill as a photographer to be an advocate of global change ... of- of climate change, and I'm going to do it either in this project or in this way?

## **Sebastian Copeland**

That definitely was an aha moment. I mean, look, while I was working, you know, I've always had a very, very strong bias for, um, for cons- ... you know, conservation. And, um, and for this sort of, you know, conflictual relationship between, um, you know, that the humans and- and nature, how sort of the anthropogenic footprint on nature was not necessarily a good thing for anyone, including, um, humans. So thi- this was something that had been with me since my studies and in- in natural sciences and- and whatnot, and- and especially in humanities to a large extent. Um, so philosophically, I was very keen on- on- on- on that particular dimension. But once again, I was shooting commercially and I was studying on the side and I was an athlete. And so the aha moment for me was when I was introduced to the, you know, the- the- the, sort of the links between certain specific industrial actions and their impact on various ecosystems and- and, uh, climate systems. And to me, that was the aha moment where I thought, okay, this is something that is just much bigger than Madison Avenue or Hollywood. And I have a skill set, I have a childhood passion, and how can I combined these interests and, uh, capitalize on my skill sets. So I was a good athlete. I was a good photographer. And, uh, and I was very keen on research and, uh, uh, edifying myself on- on these topics. So the aha moment was essentially to be able to create a brand that would be combining all of this. Um, the athleticism was aspirational. Uh, the science was educational and the camera in many ways was weaponized to be able to generate, uh, a dialogue that was beyond just aesthetics.

## **Melissa Biggs Bradley**

And then was there a particular project that for you was sort of the affirmation that, okay, I had this desire to- to create something and to be impactful, and now I- I, I've achieved it, or I know I can achieve it. I mean, was there one expedition or one project that for, you said, okay, now this is gonna work?

## **Sebastian Copeland**

Absolutely. Um, I had a number of different experience that took me in extreme environments, and I was always very interested. You know, when I was in college, I had a desire to be a correspondent. And this was during, uh, you know, the conflicts in Central America, which were, uh, fairly dominant in the w-, in the field of, uh, war photography. And so the- there was always an interest in using photography as a, as a tool, if you will. Um, but then life took me in- in various directions. I did not lose my curiosity, but I was getting my

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paycheck in a certain industry. But it was really ultimately it was getting on that ship in Antarctica that was the trigger in my career. And in the second phase of my development as an adult and as an artist and as an advocate and as a researcher, and of course, as an athlete as well. So going on that ship was essentially traveling into another world. You know, that's the thing about Antarctica, and most people will get to see it by ship. I was fortunate to see both, um, crossing its interior and, uh, setting some tracks when non had ever been. But I also got to travel the Peninsula, albeit not according to the traditional, uh, tourist protocols and whatnot, but that beauty is pervasive in Antarctica. Everyone has access to it if you can afford the ticket to get you, get you on the ship. And in my case, it was a scientific research, uh, ship that was independent and doing, uh, different types of works and, um, you know, and taking, um, uh, samples through the water columns and- and looking at various, um, you know, glaciology, uh, phenomena. And what it gave me was incredible access. And this is one of the keystone rules of success in virtually every field, but photography is no exception. It is 95% of success is access. Um, and in Antarctica, never, uh, more so is that the case because being able to travel without the very, you know, reasonable protocols that have been put in place to protect that environment, uh, particularly when you have a large number of individuals that are coming into a space and potentially bringing, uh, certain types of microorganisms and bacteria. In my case, I was on a ship that was spending, you know, literally months over there. And, uh, and so I got to see the place like, um, most people will never get to see it and photograph it. And so this is my long-winded answer to your question. That was the moment where I realized, you know, this was my sabbatical. I need do this again next season. And the result of that work was my first photo book, which, uh, President Gorbachev was kind enough to do the forward on. And I won the same photography award that was just mentioned earlier, which is the International Photography Award, which is literally the- the sort of, you know, the Academy awards of photography, if you will. So I- I won that prize in- in 2007- 2007 seven. And, um, and luckily, you know, amazingly, I just won it again two days ago with this new book, um, Antarctica: The Waking Giant. Ultimately, interestingly enough, these two bookend one another. One started in- in 2005, the other one, uh, ended, you know, a couple of years ago in photography and, uh, well ultimately they talk about the same thing and, uh, document the same thing.

## **Melissa Biggs Bradley**

Yeah. Well, congratulations on a pretty amazing achievement, um, of that award-

## **Sebastian Copeland**

Thank you.

## **Melissa Biggs Bradley**

... of bookended books, but I'm curious, how are they different? I mean, what has changed on Antarctica from when you did the first book and the second book and how have ... has your approach to it changed?

## **Sebastian Copeland**

Yeah, so that's a very good question. You know, the Antarctica, uh, in the early part of ... in the late 90s, early part of the 2000s was definitely on the radar of climatologists, but it was still fairly nebulous. Um, the continent seemed that relatively stable, the Peninsula itself was definitely showing signs of, uh, of, um, you know, fracturing and- and certainly being vulnerable to climate change. We started to see the Wilkins glass ... I mean ice shelves and the, uh, the Larsen A, B and C, but Wilkins go back to 1997 when they started to crack. And the, uh, the Larsens uh, started to break, but this was pretty much kept to the Peninsula, if you look at

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Antarctica, you know, it's shaped essentially like this with this pod pointing to South America. And then you've got this continent here, which has enormous amount of mass, two miles deep, and- and one and a half times the size of the US, but the Peninsula, which is this point that, you know, the thumb, if you will, that points towards South America, this is the area that was showing signs of instability, but the- the rest of the continent was surprisingly stable. The sea ice was seeing some years ... it was extending and its ice extent relative to the years prior. And so scientifically there was a sort of prevailing, um, thinking that Antarctica was so enormous that it was impervious to some of the more subtle, um, transformations from climate globally. And that was essentially, you know, the- the- the thinking when I was there, um, initially. Some serious science was starting, just starting to be developed on some of the keystone glaciers there and the more complex, um, glacial systems. And this would be like the Pine Island and the Thwaite glaciers, and, um ... in west Antarctica. And it took 10 years literally to, to realize that the damage was not actually happening on the surface, but it was actually happening below the ocean. And this is one reason why it was difficult to ascertain, uh, because it was out of view essentially. Uh, but the results were and have been and continue and will continue to be exponential. So that is probably the most cardinal difference between how it was, uh, with my first book and how it is presently.

## **Melissa Biggs Bradley**

And what do you hope that people will take away from the second book?

## **Sebastian Copeland**

Yeah. So my work ... you know, it's my one of my heroes, Carl Sagan, who said that, uh, you know, just to paraphrase it, that, you know, you- you- you are here at this particular point in time, either by fate or, you know, by accident as, um, you know, entering a- a- a critical time in the history of- of humanity and our relationship to the planet. And that it's basically an all hands on deck moment. Um, so I ... you know, I've got a science background and artistic background and, and my, uh, what I look at as my role or my, uh, my skill set is to be able to help bridge those two worlds. So the science can be very esoteric, but the consequences of the science is well understood. At least some people disagree with it, which remains, um, you know, a- a- a bit of a, you know, nebulous area because the science of course, of the repudiation of science has become again, uh, in Vogue. But, um, but the reality is whether you see this as a mock of anthropogenic activities, or, uh, not, the fact remains that, uh, just doing observations, uh, is not something that you can deny. You know, the ice is melting, the oceans are rising. Uh, the, you know, the global trend of- of temperature is unmistakably rising. And the first line of defense is gonna be the ice, of course, because it's the first that we can tangibly see to be, uh, reacting to warmer trends. So my role as a photography and the way that I see it and- and has been a little bit of my purpose and mission, is to help people fall in love with that world in order to ca- ... as a catalyst to wanting to help protect it. And so I see my photography as a way to basically get you to appreciate, I mean, you know, this beauty is- is extraordinary around this planet. I mean, w- ... you know, and of course away from this planet too, but, uh, for the time being, this is home and, uh, and this is a home that we have every reason to want to protect and every need to want to, uh, to- to generate a different type of relationship with in order to protect ourselves. My photographs are a way to basically, uh, get through that door, start that discussion and try to bring emotions into a process that sometimes can be too cerebral, sometimes too nebulous and abstract for, uh, people who have a lot of other problems to want to care.

## **Melissa Biggs Bradley**

Yeah. Um, well, I'm actually curious because to get those photographs you travel in a very different way than most people are traveling, and I'm really curious to know a little bit about the expeditions and what's involved.

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I mean, can- can you tell us sort of, how much does it cost to do one of these expeditions? How long do you plan, what are the sort of most complicated aspects of the logistics?

## Sebastian Copeland

Yeah. So thank you for that question. First of all, I want to say that, you know, the- the way that I do it is it should not be, uh, considered a barrier to, uh, you know, to- to- to the desire to discover, uh, some of these places around the world. I happen to- to do it at a fairly high level professionally, um, and the access that I have through my, uh, connection through the science community have given me very privileged access as well. Um, this is my career. I mean, I've been invested in this for more than 20, uh, 20 plus years, so, uh, it's commensurate with the efforts that have placed into it. Uh, with that said, people have access to some regions around, uh, the polar regions, both North and South. Uh, and in Antarctica, um, you know, people have been able to visit, uh, via cruise ships and, um, and to a lesser degree, but still accessible, uh, by flying into the continent itself. Uh, this is what we call, and I don't wanna to sound too pejorative, but we call these, uh, champagne tourists, you know, just being able to get to the ice with a flight and this you can do, it's not cheap, um, if you're, if you're choosing to do it that way. And incidentally in the way that I do it is not cheap either. Um, it's always a matter of, you know, the- the further of that location and the least traveled is going to mean that at some point or another, you're gonna have to use, uh, transportation that is chartered in one way or the other. Um, I should make very clear, and this is an important point, both to me personally, but it should also be to your audience that all of my travels, my expeditions and my books, all of my public and professional life is carbon neutral. So I neutralized the carbon outputs using, um, you know, service, uh, that's, you know, that's called, um, um, you know, Climate Partners, but there's a whole slew of- of different ones who can actually neutralize your footprint. And I highly encourage particularly your travel audience to contemplate doing that because the world is for the taking, you should visit it. It is extraordinary, but there's certainly is a footprint. And particularly when it comes to cruises and- and, uh, and the nature of- of what that's, uh, is- is- is generating in terms of, um, emissions. And so I think it's a moral imperative if you want, and it's, by the way, not very expensive, but it should be a moral imperative. If you want to go do that, to keep conservation and have a general idea of what this means to these places that you do do visit. And once that's done, I think you've conscience can be clear. You can appreciate what you're doing a little bit more. And typically, I would say that those who walk the land, uh, become, uh, warriors or advocate in their defense. So I'm one of those, and this is a contentious issue, but I'm one of those who actually encourage, uh, visiting these far-flung places, as long as you do an, A responsibly and two, if you, um, neutralize your carbon output.

## Melissa Biggs Bradley

No, I was just gonna say, I agree with you, and I'm actually going for the first time in October of 2021 a group. And that was one of the aspects we put around the trip was to make sure that it was entirely carbon neutral. And I think-

## Sebastian Copeland

Right.

## Melissa Biggs Bradley

... that's actually very easy to do on every trip that one takes. And it's, it's frankly, not even very expensive to do it.

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## Sebastian Copeland

Not at all. Exactly. And you know, this- this entails programs where they can, of course, you know, the- the obvious one is- is you have companies who plant trees globally in different parks that they secure so that the trees, of course are great carbon sync. Uh, but there's also other programs where they develop solar in certain developing, uh, communities. So that's, um, it, um, you know, prevents the burning of- of tires or paper or oils or whatever it is in order to generate either heat or, um, uh, or cooking materials and whatnot. So, and then there's other programs which are about education and disenfranchised communities around the world in order to generate, uh, a sense of, uh, responsibility within these communities as well. So, so this is something that if you have the, you know, let's call it the flexibility financially, that is to go travel to far away places. There's a very small, um, you know, onus of responsibility that again is not very expensive where you can do it. With that said, my travel's typically are complex, uh, they involve getting to very, very isolated, uh, areas in Antarctica, both through the, uh, the West and the East. So in the East, that's a Russian base called Novolazarevskaya, which is, um ... you access this through South Africa, through Cape town and you fly into Novolazarevskaya through Cape town and then progress into the interior, but that ... you know, this case, uh, in my case, you do that on skis, uh, or using kites. Uh, but you know, there's ... the champagne tourist category can also secure a journey across Antarctica using vans, you know, with fat tires and whatnot. Again, I couldn't stress more the- the need to carbon neutralize that type of trip, but on the plus side, you know, there is zero, um, ecosystem in the interior of Antarctica. It's literally a white desert, like another planet. Uh, there is no food source and therefore, no, uh, no life. And it's so cold that there's not even bacterial, uh, life that exists there. So you, you're not gonna be damaging or, you know, somehow scaring the wildlife if you go into the interior. So it's something that your audience, you know, has also access, of course, it comes with a fairly high, uh, price tag.

## Melissa Biggs Bradley

Yeah. And I was gonna ask you Sebastian, after what you described, what is the, uh, sort of preparation you have to do on a physical level I'm in terms of training, um, and, you know, even just gear to- to deal with that kind of cold?

## Sebastian Copeland

Right. So, um, you- you- you have to have a mental predisposition, uh, to, uh, see pain as a, uh, you know, as a motivator and, um, you know, to some extent as a friend and I, I'm not suggesting by this, that, um, you know, I'm masochistic in any way, but it's, there- there is a dimension, of course, then if you want to, um, you know, if you want to touch that light, it's gonna be burning a little bit. And, uh, and that preparation starts really ... uh, the base of it is the physical. So of course there's a high level of training. I mean, I was, um, you know, I was, as I said, I've been an athlete my whole life. I became a professional athlete in my late 30s. Um, but I'd been a high level performer before that. And, um, but that's, I would say that's, you know, that's the- the base and the, you know, the foundational work that you do because through it is really the- the mental, uh, preparedness and that accounts for probably about 80%, uh, of the- the hard work. Uh, it's, you know ... I'm creating a silo here, the physical consideration, but ... versus the budgetary, or, you know, the- the sort of financial equation, which is, you know, by definition, the very important aspects of the kind of work that I do. But in terms of the training, it's, you know, it's high level cardio and, uh, and strengthening. Uh, it's, it's weight building, but not in the typical sort of weight class that you see in the gym, because it's, it's, you know, you've got to manage a fair amount of fat that goes along with a fair amount of muscle. And so this is a certain type of training. And the reason why that is, is because your, uh, ability to maintain weight in very cold environment where your output is so elevated, we'll never match the caloric, um, input that you are consuming. So, in other words, you- you may be burning 10,000, 11,000, 12,000 calories per day, but I invite you to try to eat that

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much and write me a postcard if you do, because it's impossible. You'll, you'll not be able to eat more than say between 5,000 and 7,000 calories a day. So you're always at a deficit and the training is about, uh, putting on extra weight in order to be able to lose it. On the plus side, it's a great weight loss programs. So-

## **Melissa Biggs Bradley**

Okay. So I have to ask you then, um, of all the expeditions that you've done, um, are ... is there a scariest moment that you can tell, uh, tell us about?

## **Sebastian Copeland**

Yes, absolutely. I mean, uh, do you have, um, an hour? (laughing) I did ... there's been a few, uh, you know, there's crevasse scares there's, uh, there's polar bears in the North that there's, uh, um, you know, there's, um, I've, I've fallen through the CIS on my way to the North pole, uh, in minus 35 degree weather. Um, so water up to your neck when you're fully closed, because the ice was too thin. Um, I'd broken two ribs on Antarctica. I almost lost two toes and good loss of ... you know, uh, a nice section of both of them, uh, my big toes, but I've had frost bites on every single one of my digits, except for ... well, we'll leave that one alone, but, uh, but nose, fingers, ears, et cetera. Um, I think the scariest one, uh ... pro- ... the- the most emotional one was in the North. Um, I've traveled crevasse fields at both in Greenland and- and Antarctica, and certainly that's definitely worth the price of admission in terms of adrenaline, if you're into that sort of thing. Um, you know, crevasses, uh, some of them are visible most of the one we're talking about how bridges, which are layers of snow ice that, um, covers them and they vary in thickness, and of course, in, um, in- in rigidity. And so you're operating in an environment that gravity has fractured and created a variety of different, um, yeah, cracks or crevasses, and you have to cross and find a line through this, uh, type of field. It has its moments. Uh, some crevasses are literally hundreds of feet deep, uh, and you may find yourself putting, you know, punching a foot through it and dangling literally above a big crevasse. Some people have fallen to their deaths. It's not uncommon. So this is probably one of the more, um, intense and adrenaline filled, uh, moments. Luckily it doesn't last too long. It's essentially the area between the glacier and the plateau. So it's when there's a certain type of slope and gravity is pulling all that eyes towards the ocean or downward, and it's creating these cracks along the way, but once you've reached a plateau, then it becomes much, uh, stable. And, uh, and after that, until you start to get back down towards the ocean, you won't be really meeting any crevasses, but I think the crevasse scare is one that we can all relate to. Um, the polar bears stalking and- and attacks, which I've had a couple of different experiences that were in the North, uh, that is certainly, um, you know, once again, um, a Kodak moment at polar.

## **Melissa Biggs Bradley**

And- and on the other side, is there ... are there been moments of, um, sort of true triumph that stand out or elation?

## **Sebastian Copeland**

Every day almost. Yes, of course. I mean the every day is- is practically an epiphany. Uh, and whether that's because of the externalities or because of the internalities, uh, you're you constantly ... you know, you're having this, this religious practically communion with nature, and all of it has to do with how you measure that against your own perceptions. And so by that, I mean that at times you're, you're privy to the most extraordinary views. I'm a climber as well and mountaineer. So I've, I've had the opportunity to experience in a way that's perhaps easier to understand what it is to climb up and to be able to see and access areas that no

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one else will see unless they get there by themselves. Antarctica, Greenland, or the North pole, it's a little bit the same thing. They are your moments that are, I've tried to convey those in my book, uh, in my books in general, but the last one on Antarctica in particular, uh, there's areas that are so magnificent that literally hardly anyone, and sometimes in some cases, no one has ever seen. Uh, and, uh, and they are really extraordinary. And sometimes it's just a simplicity that awes you, but I'm fun to say that having spent literally hundreds of days consecutive in, uh, on the ice, that hardly has ever been two days that look the same.

## **Melissa Biggs Bradley**

And are there expeditions left that you are dying to do?

## **Sebastian Copeland**

Sure. I want to go to the moon. (laughs).

## **Melissa Biggs Bradley**

Okay. I had a feeling that's where you were headed there.

## **Sebastian Copeland**

And why stop there? No, I mean, I've got two kids now, so be ... I'll go beyond the moon is no longer, uh ... you know, I'm in my late 50s, so it's not gonna be within my reach anymore. But the moon I'm still dreaming.

## **Melissa Biggs Bradley**

And w if you could sum up what it is about the Arctic and Antarctic regions, that totally captivate you, how would you do that?

## **Sebastian Copeland**

Look, uh, the Arctic is very different. Of course, the big major difference between these two regions is that the North in the Arctic is an ocean surrounded by continents. And in the South Antarctica is a continent surrounded by oceans. So one of them is essentially, uh, an ocean with a thin layer ice, the extent of which there is seasonally, um, and potentially would be entirely lost in the, you know, in the coming years from, uh, summer belts. In Antarctica, you have an enormous, um, ice mass that represents, uh, 90% of the world's fresh water in frozen form. Uh, it is, um, it's two miles deep, uh, enormous in- in extent, uh, you know, twice the size of Australia. Um, so very, very different environments, but both have a similarity in the sense that they confront you to what the world looked like long before we came along and what it's gonna look like, uh, at least in the South long after we've gone as a species, you know, bearing in mind that hu- humans have only been, uh, you know, depending on where you, what your metric is, you know, from homoe rectus, or homo sapiens or ... So, but, you know, it's between 3 million years to, um, so 175,000 years old. And, uh, Antarctica that the transition to a cold, Antarctica, it started 35 million years ago. And ice started to accumulate there in, you know, for the last 15 million years, and consistently has accumulated and gained an ice elevation since then. So needless to say, 15 million years, as long before we were around, uh, and, uh, 35 million years, even more so, and through, you know, 650 million years ago, the planet wasn't entirely covered in a cross-device, we call it the Snowball Earth. Uh, and the- the Antarctic continent feels very much like what the world would have looked like 615 million years ago, long before we had multicell, uh, multicellular organisms. Long before we had any type of, you know, um, you know, and amphibian or, uh, fish or birds, or, you know, of course not mammals, even dinosaurs, uh, you know, dinosaurs started coming around 215 million years ago.

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So, Antarctica is really literally like visiting the world before anything lived on it, or potentially another planet.

## Melissa Biggs Bradley

That's fascinating. It's a beautiful description. If you had to sum up what you think the greatest gift of travel is, what would you say that is?

## Sebastian Copeland

Well, you know, it was Mark Twain that, um, uh, that had a great quote about this, uh, and I'm gonna paraphrase 'cause I don't have it exactly in mind, but he said that, um, that travel was- was deadly to bigotry, uh, small mindedness. And, um, and there was another adjective included there, but I think that the- the greatest gift of travel ... I was fortunate, uh, you know, my mother was intent to on, uh, making us travel early when we were kids, my- my sister and I, our grandparents lived in South Africa, so that was helpful. Uh, but we got to travel quite a bit. And this habit, uh, is still today in both my wife and I, and, uh, and- and- and luckily we- we're trying to impart this onto our little kids. Of course, in COVID, it's become more complicated, but, uh, you know, these days shall come to pass. Um, but the thing about traveling is that it- it, it's so easy, uh, through fear and, you know, ignorance, to a large extent to be small-minded to think that your reality is, uh, is, you know, as the end, all that, somehow the logic that pervades ... that is ... that pervades in your, in your existence is universal, then that anyone who steps out of that reality, uh, must be doing something wrong. And I think this is a fair assessment if you haven't had a chance to- to go see how other people do it, or, um, what other places look like, what they taste like, uh, what they smell like, um, what the, you know, what the hospitality looks and feels like, what the way in which we deal with each other looks and feels like. In some ways it makes us feel better about the way we do it. And in other ways, it makes us question the way that we do it. But one thing is certain is that we're all humans here, uh, on this planet, all seven point track close to nine billion, uh, of us presently. And in this climate of fear of hyper-partisanship when there is this notion that somebody has got it right, and somebody has got it wrong. And that's the only way that will prevail is by imposing our rights on their wrong. I think that travel is what opens a channel of understanding of compromise, of flexibility, of love, quite frankly. And this is necessary in order for us to preserve, uh, ourselves as a species, but also preserve the, uh, entire, uh, biodiversity and- and ecosystems.

## Melissa Biggs Bradley

I'm so grateful to Sebastian for all of the work he does to help our planet and talking to him, made me super excited about our impact trip to Antarctica, which I'm leading this October. It's gonna be much more comfortable than his travels there. And if you're attempted to join me, check it out on our insider journeys page, the trip is a carbon neutral one. And since our future of travel summit last fall, we've implemented a carbon neutrality policy at Indagare, which means that as much as 50% at Indagare's entire carbon footprint, including member travel will now be completely carbon neutral, with the aim being to offer 100% carbon neutral services in the next few years. If you wanna learn more about this topic and Sebastian's environmental advocacy, check out his [SEDNAfoundation.org](https://www.sednafoundation.org).

And switching gears from the environment to fashion next week, I'm sharing a conversation I had with one of my favorite designers, Louise Kennedy, about life as Ireland's most famous fashion designer, the destinations that inspire her and her secrets to travel packing, and always looking stylish. I hope you'll join us.

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## Producer

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