

An aerial photograph of a savanna landscape. The ground is covered in dense green vegetation, with a network of dark, winding paths or water channels. A herd of elephants is scattered across the lower half of the image, some standing and some partially submerged in the paths. Several white birds are also visible, some standing on the ground and others in flight.

NATIONAL
GEOGRAPHIC

Greatest Landscapes

STUNNING PHOTOGRAPHS THAT INSPIRE AND ASTONISH

Foreword by **GEORGE STEINMETZ**
Text by **SUSAN TYLER HITCHCOCK**

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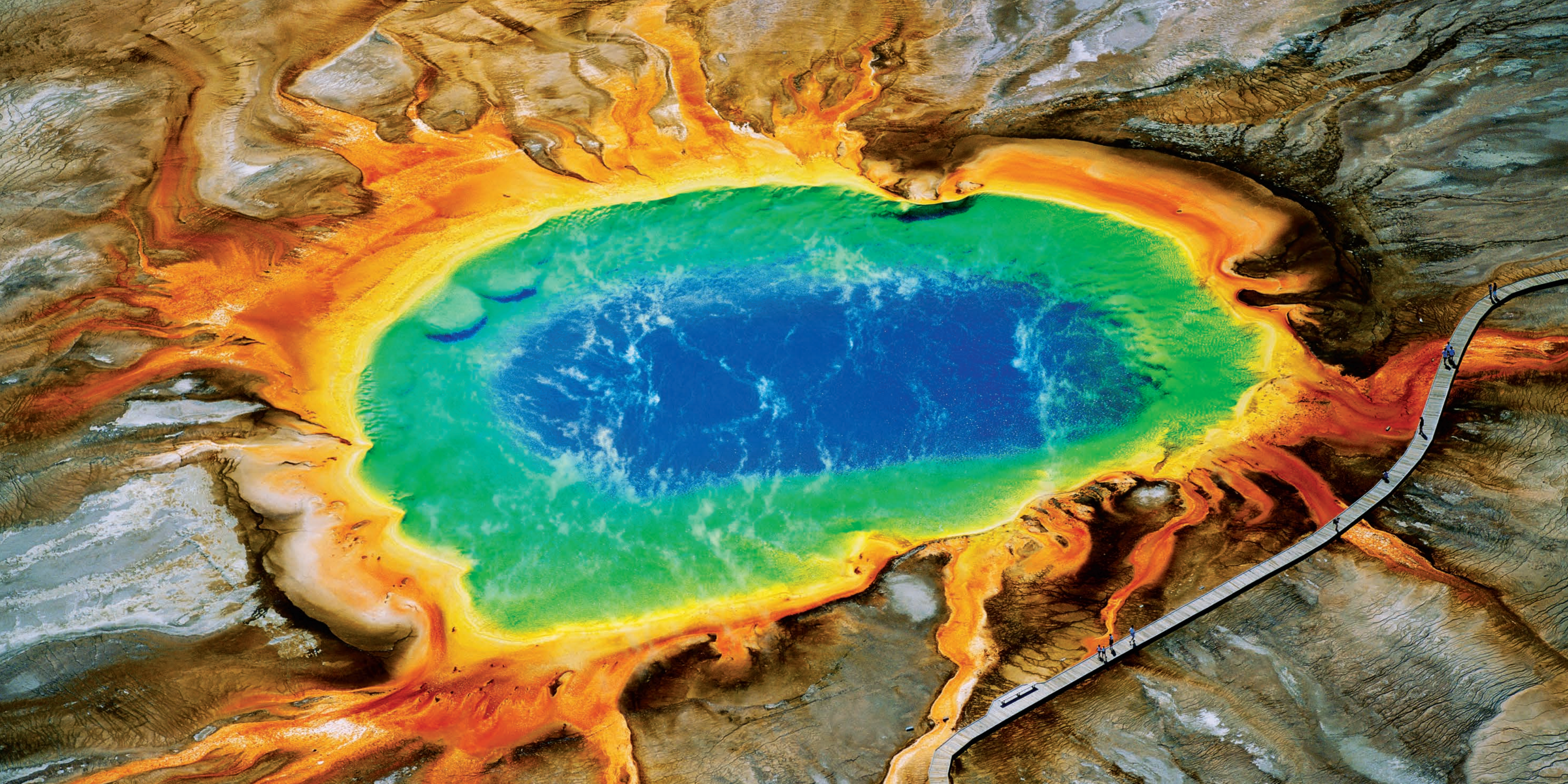
PAGE 1: GIANT'S PLAYGROUND, NAMIBIA | Quiver trees, a species of aloe, reach toward the desert night sky. | *Uge Fuertes Sanz*

PAGES 2-3: AMBOSELI NATIONAL PARK, KENYA | Elephants follow well-worn footpaths to graze on the vibrant grasses of Lake Amboseli. | *George Steinmetz*

OPPOSITE: MOUNT RAINIER, WASHINGTON | Sunrise brings pastel tones to Reflection Lakes. | *Marc Adamus*

PAGES 6-7: YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK, WYOMING | Microorganisms color the superheated waters of Grand Prismatic Spring. | *George Steinmetz*

PAGES 8-9: ROCK ISLANDS, PALAU | A boat's wake streaks white across the archipelago's waters. | *Ian Shive*









When I was a young man, I decided to leave the comforts of the world I

knew in Southern California. I bought a one-way ticket to Europe and went on a long hitchhiking trip across Africa. My mother forbade me to go, and the only money I had was from a summer job.

I didn't know much about Africa, but it was the most foreign place I could imagine: the antithesis of suburbia. I didn't know much about photography either but figured I should bring a camera so I could take pictures of strange places filled with animals and native people in exotic garb, like the ones I had seen while leafing through the pages of *National Geographic*.

I bought a high-tech backpack and filled it with stuff I thought I might need: Italian hiking shoes, a camera and a lot of film, a stove that ran on all kinds of fuel—even a snakebite kit. Then I set out to discover the world as a solitary traveler. I really didn't know what I was doing, but I had a burning curiosity to see what was over the horizon—and to try my luck as a photographer.

Mostly I took a lot of bad pictures, but I also got a few good ones and eventually learned from my mistakes. It was there that I started to dream of becoming a National Geographic photographer, and I stuck with it. And now, having worked for *National Geographic* magazine for 30 years, I feel lucky that my dream came true.

PAGES 10–11: **GREEN BLUFF, WASHINGTON** | Brilliant red autumn leaves enliven a quiet country lane. | *Chip Phillips*

PAGES 12–13: **SVALBARD, NORWAY** | Small black-and-white dovebies (*Alle alle*) dot the gray sky as they return to their nests. | *Paul Nicklen*

PAGES 14–15: **CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA** | A long camera exposure captures evening fog rolling across Kloof Nek and Signal Hill. | *Eric Nathan*

OPPOSITE: **LENÇÓIS MARANHENSES NATIONAL PARK, BRAZIL** | The rainy season fills pockets between barchan dunes along Brazil's northeastern coast. | *George Steinmetz*

In those early years it seemed like I was always the young punk on every trip. Well, now I find that I'm often the oldest punk on the trip—but the spirit of my adventures is exactly the same.

Sometimes people ask me to share a favorite picture that I've shot. The answer to that one is simple: It's always "the next one." What's important is not just getting the picture; it's *wanting* to get the next picture. It's the wanting that propels you forward.

While I may be known for the landscapes that I've photographed, I see myself more as a journalist and a storyteller. When I arrive in a place, I try to respond to what I see and tell the story of the land. There are no rules or guidelines in that pursuit—except to follow your curiosity and instinct, and try to learn from your mistakes.

With a static subject like a landscape, it might seem strange to try to capture a precise moment. But sometimes the trick is just that: the time when a boat jets through a turquoise passageway between tropical islands, or birds take flight over a glassy lake at dawn. Just as often, though, that magical moment is the stillness of a place, when *nothing* is happening. It's then that you see the sun draw bright green out of a lake, or the pattern of the land, like the web of elephant grazing paths as seen from above on pages 2–3.

There is an old saying that bad weather is a photographer's best friend. But the reality is that every situation is an opportunity, and the challenge is to figure out how to make the best of it. Great landscape photography is like jazz—yet another form of improv—where intuition and spontaneity intersect. I hope you will experience those wondrous collisions in the inspired pages that follow.

—George Steinmetz



OPPOSITE: SAHARA, CHAD | Sandstone pinnacles rise from orange dunes of the Karnasai Valley. | George Steinmetz

O, Wind, if Winter comes, can *Spring* be

far behind? ~ Percy Bysshe Shelley

SPRING





ORGAN PIPE NATIONAL MONUMENT, ARIZONA | Yellow petals of Mexican poppies juxtapose a cholla cactus skeleton. | *Jack Dykinga*



HVERFJALL CRATER, ICELAND | Under a full moon, wind sweeps snow into drifts. | *Orsolva Haarberg*



OPPOSITE: NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA | In Sydney's North Bondi suburb, multicolored houses crowd a cliff above crashing surf. | *Rune Svendsen*

NEXT PAGES: ICELAND | The calm, geothermal waters of the Blue Lagoon match the sky overhead. | *HawaiiBlue*

“ The black basaltic rocks that make up the Faroe Islands coastline can overwhelm a photograph, making images feel cold and colorless. But such a dramatic location deserves to be photographed, and fortunately this beautiful little rock pool came to my rescue, a pool of emerald in a dark landscape.

~Adam Burton





GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK, WYOMING | Majestic snowcapped peaks of the Teton Range rise behind the John Moulton barn. | *Russell Burden*







IGUAÇU NATIONAL PARK, BRAZIL | Water cascades over the many cataracts of Iguazu Falls. | *Frans Lanting*



SALAR DE UYUNI, BOLIVIA | Salt pyramids punctuate the Altiplano, high in the Andes. | *Sergio Ballivian*



YUNNAN PROVINCE, CHINA | Eight Tibetan Buddhist stupas align. | *Dong Lei*



OPPOSITE: GIVERNY, FRANCE | Water lilies float on still pond waters in Claude Monet's garden. | *Diane Cook and Len Jenschel*

NEXT PAGES: MISSION MOUNTAINS, MONTANA | Horses and riders cross stunning scenery in northwestern Montana. | *Keith Ladzinski*





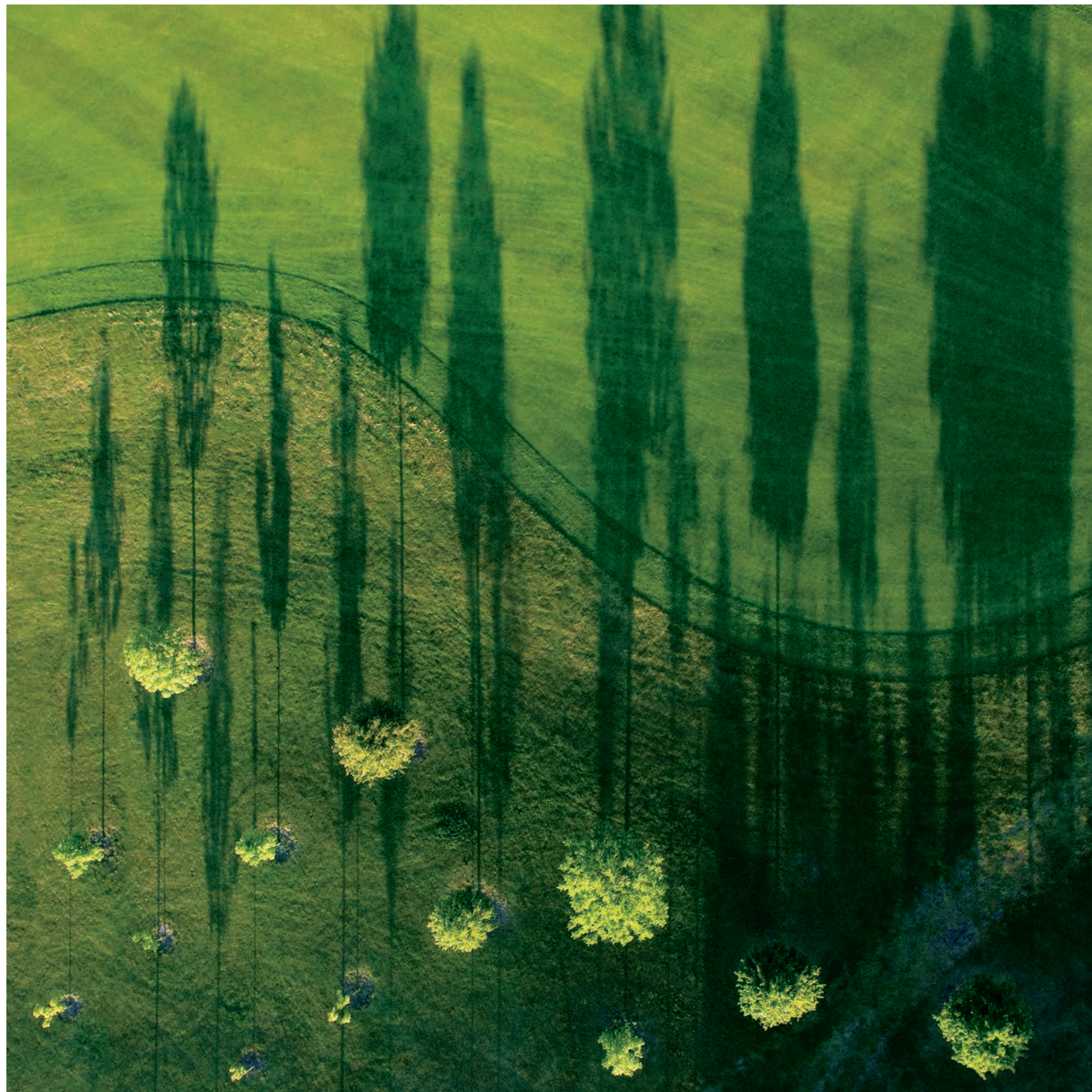
HAKODATE, JAPAN | Blossoming cherry trees cast soft reflections in still water. | *Hiroyuki Morita*



BALI, INDONESIA | A limestone pillar arcs over the water off Nusa Penida Island. | *Jason Edwards*



ZHREBICHEVO LAKE, BULGARIA | Silken waters surround an old village church. | *Plamen Kojuharov*



“ I take the majority of my photographs in Poland, during flights within a radius of 60 kilometers from Gdynia, where I live. I want to leave the photographs open for interpretation. It is up to you what you actually see in the photograph—whether it is the dark green shadows of trees or something else entirely.

~Kacper Kowalski

OPPOSITE: WEJHEROWO, POLAND | Shadows drape a sculpted golf course near the Baltic coast. | *Kacper Kowalski*

NEXT PAGES: NAMIB-NAUKLUFT PARK, NAMIBIA | Graceful springbok walk along the sands and red dunes of the Namib Desert. | *Art Wolfe*





TUSCANY, ITALY | Rolling hills embrace a lone tree on a slope in Volterra, Italy. | *Tino Soriano*



MÅLØY, NORWAY | Waves sculpt Kannesteinen Rock, as they have for thousands of years. | *Nikolay Dimitrov*



NEKO HARBOR, ANTARCTICA | A breeding colony of gentoo penguins occupies a bare shore. | *David Merron*

“ A storm cleared, and after days of dark turbulence the polar air was pure and translucent. Small ice floes covered with a layer of fresh snow surrounded our sailboat and hit its steel hull, their impact bringing forth high crystalline sounds of tiny brass bells.

~Yva Momatiuk and John Eastcott

OPPOSITE: SOUTH SANDWICH ISLANDS, SOUTH ATLANTIC OCEAN | Clouds and floating ice center an Antarctic iceberg. | *Yva Momatiuk and John Eastcott*

NEXT PAGES: HUNAN PROVINCE, CHINA | Tree-topped sandstone pillars tower in Wulingyuan Scenic and Historic Interest Area in central China. | *Thierry Bornier*





PROVENCE, FRANCE | Wind sets wheat and lavender in motion. | *Veronika K. Ko*



GIZA, EGYPT | The Pyramids at Giza pierce the sky behind a man leading two camels across amber sands. | *Richard T. Nowitz*



MASTIC BEACH, NEW YORK | Fences zigzag across the shoreline's ivory sands. | *Alex MacLean*





OPPOSITE: DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK, ENGLAND | The moss, ferns, and dwarf oaks of Wistman's Wood harken back to primordial times. | *Duncan George*

PREVIOUS PAGES: RAJASTHAN, INDIA | In the early morning birds take flight above the abandoned buildings of Jal Mahal in Jaipur. | *Ravikanth Kurma*



“ Fog often occurs here, especially in spring and early summer. You need good luck to see a scene this spectacular. After rain this harmonious night view of Mount Fuji appeared. The sea of thick clouds was colored by the lights below. I captured this fantastic scene in a three-minute exposure.

~Takashi



Ah, *summer*, what power you have to make us suffer and like it. ~ Russell Baker

SUMMER

SUMMER



In the middle of a sweet summer day

it feels as if this is how it should be forever. Blue skies, tender breeze, nature at the solstice extreme. At distant latitudes, the warming world turns ice to water.

The sun awakens before we do and stays up past bedtime. The green world stretches into the clear blue sky, catching every ray of light it can. Plants push the limits of how far they grew the year before. Sap courses unseen, up and down and through the trunks, limbs, and branches, each tree's inward flow silently echoing the surge of water through summer landscapes. Flowers show off their most outrageous colors: bright pink, blood red, brash orange, brilliant yellow. Summer can mean abundance. Bouquets turn the pleasures of the season into something we can hold and cherish and give away.

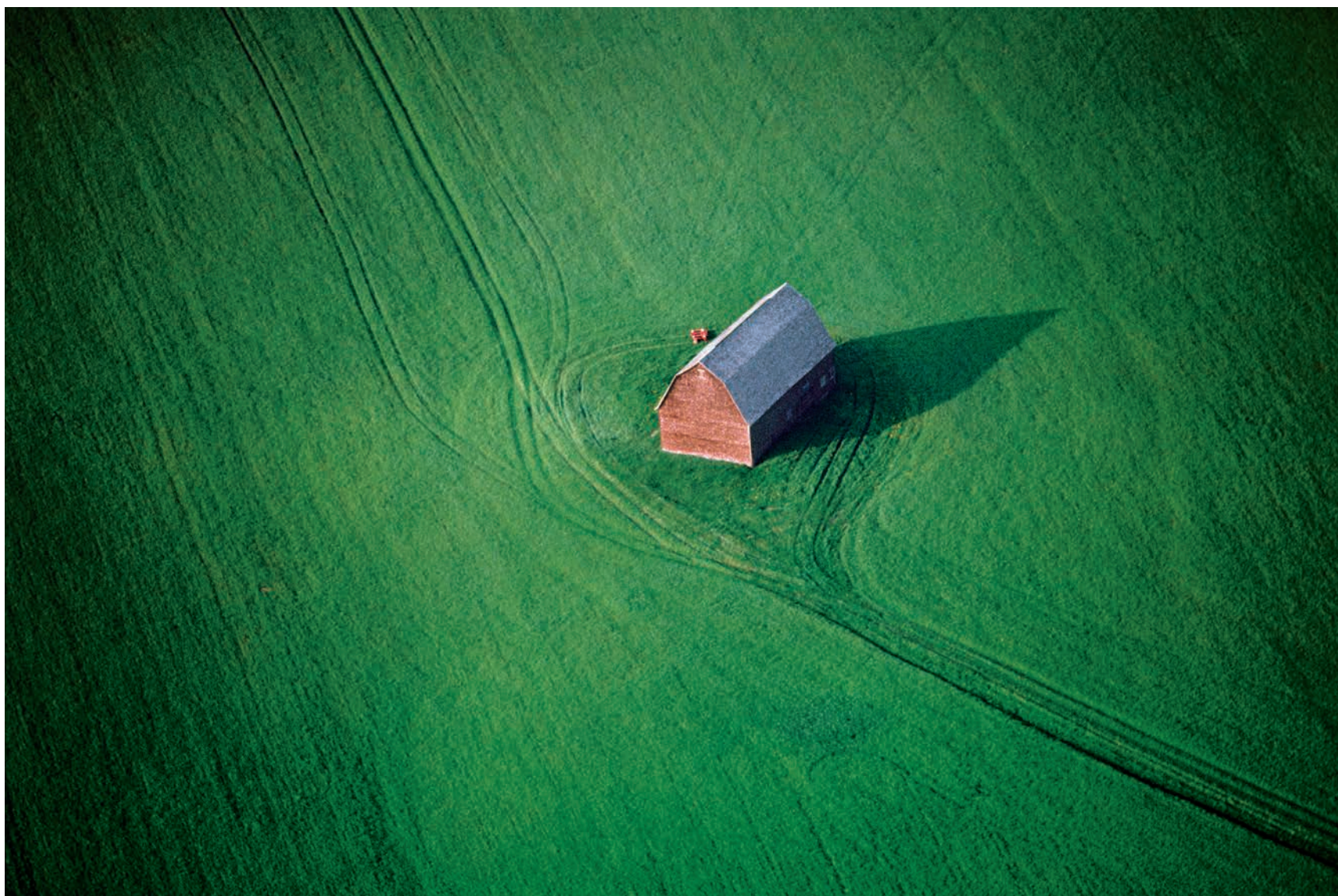
As summer flowers clamor for attention, something even bolder builds up above, and the forces of summer insist we turn our attention to the sky. Afternoon clouds congregate. Their contours mount, dune upon snowy dune. They seem to gain in substance, darkening as they go. The force, the winds, the energy gather, towering over all until with a deafening burst of light and sound and power they release. Thunder follows, rumbles rolling on and on into the vast world beyond our ken.

Emerging from the storm, refreshed by the rain, summer stretches out again. Fruit ripens; fledglings take wing. Grasses bend with the weight of swelling grain. And if we are lucky—if the light slants and the droplets of moisture hang in the balance just so—the sky fills with a million prisms, and for the briefest moment summer skies climax in all the colors of the rainbow.

OPPOSITE: INYO NATIONAL FOREST, CALIFORNIA | Weathered, twisting branches of an ancient bristlecone pine seem to dance. | *Ken Lee*

NEXT PAGES: KAUAI, HAWAII | A rainbow over the ruggedly beautiful Na Pali Coast plunges into the Pacific. | *Frans Lanting*





MINNESOTA | Tire tracks leave faint indentions in a lush green field. | *Paul Chesley*



BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA | A green islet appears to float on the waters of Tumuch Lake. | *Shane Kalyn*



GLEN CANYON NATIONAL RECREATION AREA, UTAH |
A motorboat rides the gentle curves of Reflection Canyon. | *Michael Melford*

“ The hike up to the Col Raiser alpine pastures from Selva di Val Gardena rewards you with stunning views of the hand-cut grass fields, looking eastward toward the dominating peaks of the Geisler group. This pasture suddenly drops away on the northern edge into the valley below.

~James Buchan

OPPOSITE: SELVA DI VAL GARDENA, ITALY | An angled meadow in the Italian Dolomites | *James Buchan*

NEXT PAGES: YANGSHUO, CHINA | Cone-shaped karst peaks stretch to the horizon in early morning. | *Karl Willson*







DEAD SEA, ISRAEL | Tourists at the Ein Bokek resort waded into the Dead Sea's buoyant waters. | *George Steinmetz*



DUXBURY, MASSACHUSETTS | Colorful dinghies cluster around a dock. | *Alex MacLean*



OPPOSITE: GREAT WALL OF CHINA, JINSHANLING SECTION | The defensive walls of China's fortress masterpiece stretch along verdant, green hills. | *Martos Hoffman*

NEXT PAGES: OIA, GREECE | A brilliant orange sunset adds to the glimmer from the homes of the Mediterranean's Santorini island. | *Inge Johnsson*







QUANZHOU, CHINA | Sunbeams light a forest path for a woman carrying buckets. | *Tianyi Liu*

“ The view from this cliff-top vista resembles a scene from science fiction. If you don't notice the road passing through the valley, it feels like a thousand years ago when these bizarre monasteries were home to monks or nuns who isolated themselves from the outside world by living on top of giant, sandstone pillars.

~Babak Tafreshi

OPPOSITE: THESSALY, GREECE | Monasteries on the sandstone pillars of Meteora, a World Heritage site | *Babak Tafreshi*

NEXT PAGES: PALOUSE, WASHINGTON | Golden grain fields seem to match the color of distant honey-yellow hills. | *Chip Phillips*







ANTONIO VARAS PENINSULA, CHILE | Four *bagueros*—cowboys—pause their search for feral livestock against Patagonia's stunning backdrop. | *Tomás Munita*





OPPOSITE: PENÍNSULA DE GUANAHACABIBES BIOSPHERE RESERVE, CUBA | A distant sailboat and a puffy white cloud add to the Caribbean Sea's tranquility. | *Steve Winter*

NEXT PAGES: MOUNT HOOD, OREGON | Wildfire smoke envelops the Cascade Range as seen from a weathered whitebark pine's perch on Mound Hood. | *Paul C. Glasser*





SOUTH GOBI, MONGOLIA | A double rainbow makes a stunning panorama for yurts in the foreground. | *Ira Block*



LAKE NAM, CHINA | Prayer flags stretch toward a high altitude lake on the Tibetan Plateau. | *Michael S. Yamashita*



When I entered the blooming lavender fields of Valensole in French Provence, I was struck by a crazy perfume of lavender flowers covering the ground from one horizon to the other. Purple hills of flowering rows alternate with green hills of already cut lavender. It's an astonishing view that everyone should see in a lifetime.

~Vadim Balakin

OPPOSITE: PROVENCE, FRANCE | Parallel rows of lavender and vibrant pink clouds compose a surreal vista of the Valensole Plateau. | *Vadim Balakin*

NEXT PAGES: LIGURIA, ITALY | Beach umbrellas make a colorful mosaic over the sands of Monterosso al Mare on the Italian Riviera. | *H. P. Huber*







GREAT SAND DUNES NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE, COLORADO | Climbers shrink from view as they ascend the tallest dunes in North America. | *Barbara Motter*





NORMANDY, FRANCE | Mont Saint-Michel twinkles as twilight descends on the bay surrounding the medieval monastery. | *bluejayphoto*



OPPOSITE: MALDIVES, INDIAN OCEAN | Glistening blue water, white sands, and green palm trees complete an iconic beach scene. | *Martin Child*

NEXT PAGES: CASCADE RANGE, WASHINGTON | Wildflower patches and verdant slopes roll toward Mount Rainier's snowcapped volcanic peak. | *Art Wolfe*





ICELAND | Water tumbles over Háifoss and Granni waterfalls. | *Orsolya Haarberg*



YUCATÁN, MEXICO | A sunbeam spotlights a swimmer in the Xkeken cenote, which the Maya believed led to the underworld. | *John Stanmeyer*

“ I took this picture in 2015, on the hottest day of the summer. I was sweating away in my plane. Many images are taken during the day's corners, when the shadows get longer, but people aren't bathing then. So I used a long telephoto lens and took this picture from quite far away to capture the structure and form.

~Hans Blossey





OPPOSITE: BORA BORA, FRENCH POLYNESIA | A barrier reef curves around craggy Mount Otemanu. | *Frans Lanting*

NEXT PAGES: SARHADD, AFGHANISTAN | A field of wildflowers contrasts rugged mountains. | *Matthieu Paley*

