

Author



We spoke to [Tom Parkinson](#), a modern languages graduate, about his experiences as an author at the Lonely Planet.

What did you study at university?

I did a BA (Hons) in French and German - it was a toss-up between that and English, but in the end I preferred the languages course, as it included a year abroad.

What was your first job?

My first full-time job was Editorial Assistant at a major dictionary publisher in my year out before university; I ended up coming back to the same office every vacation, and worked as a casual Bilingual Editor after I graduated.

So how did you get to the job you are in today?

Fluke, really! A few months after I graduated, Lonely Planet ran their first-ever recruitment campaign for new authors; I saw the ad in the newspaper (having interviewed unsuccessfully a couple of times for editorial positions), did a writing sample and within a couple of months I'd been offered my first guidebook gig.

What is your typical day like?

No day's quite the same, but generally during research I'll be running around like crazy, checking out dozens of hotels, restaurants, museums and the like (not forgetting bars, of course). For the write-up, though, I'll be behind my desk in London for anything up to 18 hours a day around deadline time. So not that different to student life!

What's been your biggest challenge?

The first day of my first book - stepping off the plane on my own with only a vague idea what was expected of me...

What do you love about your job?

All the best aspects of the travel: meeting people, discovering new places, revisiting old favourites. There's also plenty of satisfaction in nailing a neat phrase or paragraph, and I do still get a little buzz every time I see my name in print!

What has been your best moment?

It's hard to choose, but climbing Mt Kenya, hanging out on Lamu island, researching nightlife in Berlin, hitching through the Sahara belt and jungle trekking in Borneo are definitely among the highlights.

What keeps you motivated every day?

On good days, interesting surroundings, natural curiosity and the promise of fresh adventures; on bad days, time pressure and grim determination to get everything done...

What's next? What do you hope for in the future?

This year I'm hopefully off to Madagascar for my first solo guidebook project, followed by a bit of a break for some personal travel time (my first holiday in five years!). In the long term, like most journos I'd really like to write a 'proper' book or two.

Since Tom wrote this article for us, we were sad to hear that he had died, from a heart condition, in January 2007.

Tom did make his trip to Madagascar and was in the middle of writing up his first solo guidebook, which will now be completed in his memory by a team of colleagues.

His family have requested that Tom's article stay on the site and we all hope that his words encourage any budding journos to fulfil their dreams.

To find out more about the Lonely Planet visit their website at www.lonelyplanet.com.