



Geert Weggen build his meditation place from material out of nature

Geert Weggen Unusual Travels

During his 46 years of life, this Dutch national, Geert Weggen had time to experience more than most people. After years of traveling and his longing to commune with nature, Geert made the decision to pack up and move away from all he knew. He decided to travel by sailboat. Currently he lives in a small village in Sweden and fills his days with the spiritual, art and animal photography. Text och foto: Andrea Ivares Berglind

Translated from Swedish to English by Geert Weggen Text corrections by Catherine MLP Pagano

The spring sun shines in Geert's face. He sits in his sailboat looking out over the water. The boat is filled with enough food for three weeks.

There are maps and enough money to manage for one year. On this particular day in March 2005 he notes that the weather is perfect and in that moment he decides to leave Amsterdam. There are no loved ones waving goodbye to him. He is completely alone. Nobody knows that he is leaving today. He practiced his sailing skills for several weeks prior on Lake IJsselmeer. While seeing the islands of Holland behind him, some large fish, similar to dolphins, began swimming around the boat. A good sign he thinks. After several hours of sailing there is suddenly a dense fog. He cannot see more than 5 meters. Large ships sound their horns in the distance. He is sailing now in the ocean channel for big ships.

He is frightened. There is only the sound of horns. It would be better to go back; but then he talks to his fear and decides to cross the big shipping lane anyways. After half an hour, both the fog and his fear pass. He sees a clear channel and the fog is suddenly gone. Released, he let the south wind carry him northward.

Geert is sitting in his home at the kitchen table, in the village of Bispgården. It has been ten years since he left Amsterdam, for a life closer to nature. -Many thought I was crazy to leave everything behind me; but I trusted my heart.

He takes a sip of coffee and fastens his gaze far across the room. He has built almost everything in his home and most of it is made from natural materials. A spiritual theme is carried throughout. -I had a girlfriend, friends and a company in the Netherlands. For all involved, it seemed to be a good life.

But I needed to get to a new phase in my life and develop as a person. How lonely it can feel with so many beautiful people around.

In Amsterdam Geert worked on his art, shamanism and healing. He had also been a sailing instructor. So it felt natural for him to choose to sail to a new life. Airplanes and cars do not work for me. They go too fast. The journey is a path I must experience. I might as well have traveled by horse. Geert takes some deep breaths. -Yes, when I think of a horse with a carriage, it sounds fantastic.

Geert Weggen

Age: 46

Lives: Bispgården, Jämtland

Coming from : Holland

Prefers: Alone in the wild

Occupation: Primarily an artist and photographer. Also works as a mason, carpenter and in a retirement home.

Interests: Music, photography, art and dance

Thread of Life: Shamanism



Geert Weggen has a big collection of native music instruments

Geert Weggen is laying on his bed and thinks "now I'm going to die"

There are a few things in his home that accompanied him on this trip. Some musical instruments, a few books and some clothes were all that fit in the boat.

-I bought a lot of maps and read about 50 books about people who have traveled by boat. Although I knew a lot about boats, I knew nothing about the sea.

Geert sold his company, book collection and most things he had. He bought a sailboat, a Westerly 25. He lived on the boat in Amsterdam, on a canal, throughout the winter of 2004, in preparation for this trip.

-I did not know where I would go. But I knew I wanted to come to a place with winters and mountains. When a beautiful March spring day came with a south wind, I saw it as a sign. Northwards it will be. So I sailed away without looking back. For three days Geert has been awake. Rain whips his face. The boat is in the middle of the ocean. He hallucinates about a man fishing, who suddenly is standing in the sea with a lantern in his hand. He sees things that cannot be there, but seem so real. He is exhausted, but the high waves make him continue to fight at the helm.

A ship turns up in the dense fog of the night. Geert does not notice it until the full force of that ship is running into his boat. The ship does not notice that it crashed against his small sailing boat. The ship just continued on. Everything above the deck of Geert's boat, is completely broken and the engine is too weak to do any good among the big waves. Then it starts pouring rain. Wet and cold Geert retreats into the boat's cabin and lays down on the bed. -Now I'm going to die, he thinks.

Geert has visited around 50 countries and lived in the Sri Lanka jungle where he bought a house. But after one year, he moved back to Amsterdam. That was in 2000.

-Traveling like I did, was to cut myself loose from all the rules and the culture I had been living in.



Every day squirrels come and eat out of Geert Weggens hands.

But the separation from loved ones was difficult. And the big differences in life values in Sri Lanka, versus his own, were too great.

In 2005 he tried it all again and this time he planned to live in a country where their life values were closer to his own.

-I said to my friends and family that I loved them, but that I would never see them again. I have not seen them all these years. I was scared and it was not easy. But it was the perfect choice for me.

Even though deep down he knew that he was not a family man, he has repeatedly lived together.

-I have tried to adapt myself to the community. I thought for a long time that I would be happy living like most people. But it does not work like that. It is not possible to live a happy life while doing things against my nature.

"I did not know the language, and there where so many new things, I felt like a child"

As a child Geert was mostly in his own world. He grew up in a small town with a father who beat him. He also had three siblings and a mother.

-I often had nightmares and cried out in my sleep. I was afraid and allergic to most things. My parents did not know how to take care of me. I often say that my father tried to beat me down to earth.

-I choose to look upon this as a good thing. Strangely, many years later, I asked my father why he beat me?

His response was that he never did do that. I was silent after his answer. This was so unexpected to hear. The memories of pulling me by the hair from corner to corner, my bleeding nose, my ribs hurting. According to my father, it never happened. What could I say?

Because Geert lived in the spiritual world, he felt alone; an outsider. -When I was born, I refused to drink my mother's milk. Growing up with sugar water was the alternative. I was fragile and did not want to be on earth. I lived more in the world of ghosts.

"For me is spirituality more important than food and water, without contact with that light I am lost"



Geert Weggen has built his house and the interior almost everything self.

The night turns to day, while Geert is lying in the bed on his boat.

-If there is anything for me to do on earth, then I will survive, he thinks. This is not the first time he's been confronted with his own death.

He thinks that the waves could bring the sailboat to Norway. He starts trying to make a small sail on a stick. The waves are less high and there is not so much rain anymore. Suddenly, a Norwegian fishing boat shows up in the middle of the sea. They come to help Geert with a long rope and he gets a transmitter so they can communicate. They take him to Denmark and make contact with the Danish rescue service.

After a month on the mainland in Denmark, in a village called Hanstholm, he realizes that it is time to sail on. After many weeks of nightmares and a promise never to sail again, he starts to think about traveling. He buys a used mast and repairs the boat with his friendly Denmark hosts. Instead of going straight across the sea, he sails through Denmark along the Limfjorden. On the third day, it becomes stormy and the secondhand mast breaks near the island of Livo. The waves smash the boat against the rocks of the island. His anchors do not help much from keeping the boat from the rocks. He takes off his clothes and jumps in the water between the rocks. Naked, he tries to find help. He is so confused about why this is happening again. He finds it difficult to think clearly.

Geert's house is located within walking distance to most things in Bispgården. There is a grocery store; which is also the post office and a clothing store. There is also a local pizzeria. The village has no more than 800 mainly old people living here. The neighbors leave him in peace.

To create balance of what he takes from nature, he has planted around 8000 trees. He also gives his hair to nature after cutting it himself.

- People think I'm crazy. Of course I am, says Geert with a smile.



-When I came here I had nothing except that stove, musical instruments, clothing and books.

The stove he points out, has a chimney made with river stones that he has built himself.

-I could not speak the language, I did not know how to process wood for heating. There were so many unknown things that I felt like a child. No one understood me when I went into the store to buy food. Now most people in town understand and speak English, because there have been so many foreigners that have arrived.

Among the traditional red houses in this area, his boat-shaped villa stands out from the crowd.

The island of Livo is not larger than 320 hectares. There is no way to save his boat. People of the island give him shelter and work. In order to get money to repair the sailboat he works as a painter and tractor driver. Weeks later they pull the boat from the rocks and place it on the beach where he starts to repair it. He meets a Swedish/Danish man who invites him to come to Sweden. It is now September 7th; months after he left Holland. With his repaired boat and a new secondhand mast, he sails to Hoganas in Skåne, to meet up with this man.

Skåne turned out to be too much like Holland and Geert wanted to go further north. He looked for a house on the internet and found a cheap home in Bispgården, Sweden. He borrowed a motorcycle and drove without a driver's license to the house, situated in the middle of Sweden. In October 2005 he moved in.

For almost 20 years Geert has worked with shamanism. The goal was to start a spiritual center in Bispgården.

-For me it is the spiritual essence of life that is more important than food and water. Now I travel more inwards than outwards.

Ghosts and life after death are a natural part of Geert's life. As are his visions and the possibility of communicating with the spirits, animals and nature.

-I've seen so many things in this world that cannot be explained. But they exist nonetheless. There was a time that I wanted to share this with others and hoped that they could come close to my world; instead I kept coming close to theirs. Magic, light, wonders, God, aliens, magic beings, angels...In my life they exist and are a part of my life and communication. For now, that is good enough for me.

Outside the window fly two great tits. A squirrel climbs on the windowsill. On the kitchen counter there stands a camera on a tripod. The balcony outside has no walls and is like a photo studio. There are lights and a chaos of props. Because Geert photographs in both snow and rain, he has removed part of the roof to accommodate the changing weather. The photographs he takes are then sold on the internet.

-The neighbors probably think I am spying on them. But it is from the kitchen window that I photograph most of my animal pictures.