

renegade

game changers | thought leaders | rule breakers | style makers

COLLECTIVE

ISSUE 12

**WHY IT PAYS
BIG TO SOUND
A LITTLE DIRTY**

#thefrankeffect

**LEANDRA
MEDINE**

REPELLING MEN
SINCE 1988

**ALL THE
RIGHT
MOVES**

NAILING
YOUR
NICHE

+

3D

**SKETCH IT
PRINT IT
WEAR IT**

**LILY
COLE**

model turned everything



LOCALS ONLY

TRAVELLING like a local is the hallmark of any BACKPACKER worth their sweat but it's harder than it looks. Now one COMPANY is creating a LOCAL HOME – and friends – for your next trip.

WORDS MELINDA BARLOW

Two people stand together at the opening of a pop-up gallery in Neukölln, Berlin. They each cradle jam jars of straight vodka crammed with chunks of fresh lime, and chat animatedly together as the room fills with enthusiastic arty types.

They're here to see the latest outpouring of creativity the city has to offer, yet just two hours before, they were strangers.

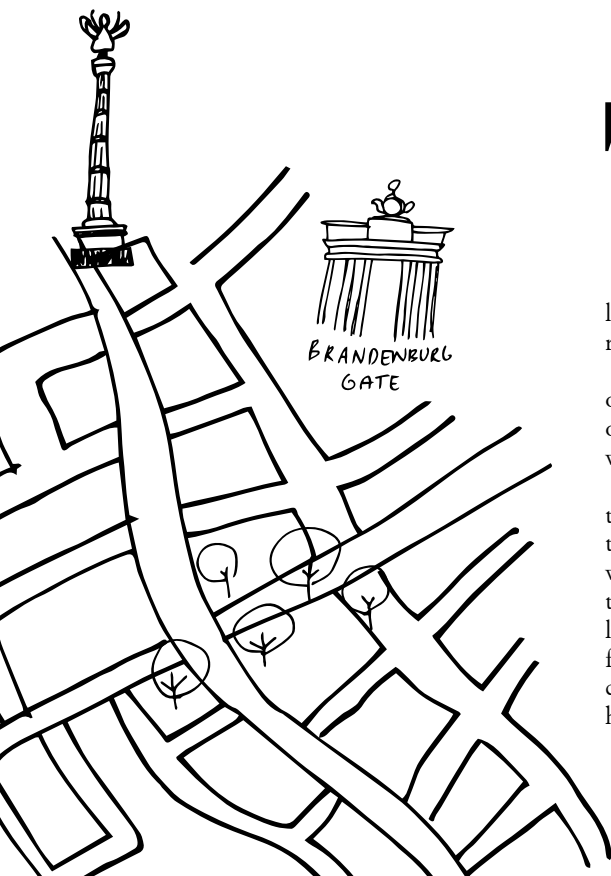
Now they'll spend the better part of the day together as friends, thanks to the clever brainchild of Clare Freeman, where like-minded locals become tour guides in their own city, and the line between work and a new-found friendship is intentionally blurred. It could be an art exhibition one week, a house party or a picnic by the river the

next, but whatever it is, you definitely won't find it in the tourist guides and the locals involved are more than happy for you to tag along to whatever interesting thing they have on that week.

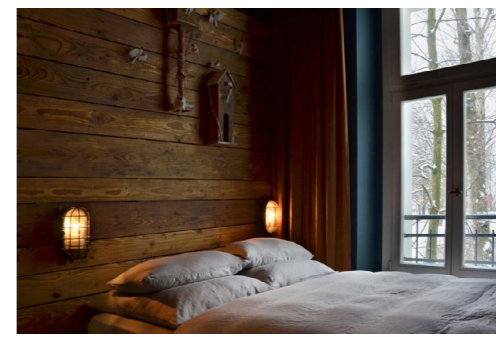
Clare formed the idea for My Plus One after working in public relations for Condé Nast and Design Hotels, a career that took her across Europe and the US, including trips to Berlin, London and New York, where she saw some of the "coolest" hotels across the globe.

"The important thing a Design Hotel has in a location is its ability to become part of the local neighbourhood," explains Clare.

"This concept really appeals to travellers, and I was excited to create a space that would become a part of the area – where local people live. Not with other tourists around you but locals doing their everyday thing." >



BERLIN



Although born in Berlin, My Plus One now offers unique travel and accommodation bookings in five European cities – Amsterdam, Barcelona, Berlin, London and Paris, for people looking for a different kind of urban experience. Most visitors really only scratch the surface of a new town, as they access the historical culture, says Clare. But many cities have an uber cool, modern day version of that culture, made and lived by its locals.

“I’ve travelled a lot and lived in a few different places – Australia, Shanghai, London – but it was in Buenos Aires where I thought how much more amazing the city would be if I had a local

this trio, as Clare explains: “I loved being part of the design process. Paola loves to use salvaged materials in her designs, so her, JP and myself would go to massive barns outside of Berlin and look through piles of wood. We’d find interesting pieces and take them to a carpenter’s workshop and sand them down ourselves. The whole kitchenette area is all constructed by hand and the kitchen front cabinets are old parquet floorboards we found.”

That first property was just the beginning, because a few months after launching in Berlin, Clare began to think about the scalability of her business.

Without the capital to invest in

THE PRIORITY *was to offer a truly local person to show a TRAVELLER around the city, and by MATCHING people with similar interests, they both BENEFIT from and ENJOY the experience.*

who knew great places to go and what to do. I wanted to be able to live part of a life in that city that was not in the tourist guides, and Buenos Aires has such a cool subculture, I really needed a local to truly access it.”

Clare’s first step in business was to create a simple one-room hotel in a “very normal” apartment block in so-hot-right-now Kreuzkölln, Berlin.

“I thought it would be exciting to create a hotel space where local people live, that would become part of the neighbourhood.”

But this was only half of the idea. Clare purchased the property in November 2011 and along with two innovative and passionate Berlin-based architects, Paola Bagna and JP Coss, gutted and redesigned the 30 square metre space.

It was certainly a passion project for

multiple properties in different cities, she decided to forge relationships with some of the existing properties she had come across in her former life. Together, they offer affordable, stylish and eco-sensitive lodgings to curious travellers.

The first partner property was Tautes Heim, a lovingly restored house in the Hufeisensiedlung (Horseshoe Estate), one of Berlin’s six Modernism Housing Estates, now UNESCO World Heritage listed. This was closely followed by Miniloft, then the purpose-designed Michelberger Hotel.

Clare then partnered with a Linnen B&B and Brilliant Apartments, as well as Be My Guest who recommend various properties such as the Rummelsburg houseboat – a stylish glass box situated on water.

“I wanted to only partner with properties that are attractive to young

travellers like myself,” explains Clare.

“People looking for places to stay that are not only stylish, well-located and eco-conscious, but affordable too. It was really important that the hotels were a part of a local neighbourhood and connected their guests with the streets around them, in an intimate and down-to-earth way.”

The rest of Clare’s time was spent building the My Plus One community to increase the variety of locals and experiences for guests to choose from.

“The priority was to offer a truly local person to show a traveller around the city, and by matching people with similar interests, they both benefit from and enjoy the experience.”

In the early stages, Clare’s friends helped out, but interest grew quickly and new locals started to contact her about being involved. They were paid, but Clare found that people often wanted to be involved just to meet others, to share their love for the city and to practice languages other than their own.

A stay with a friend usually results

in the exchange of a gift, and Clare has encouraged this within the community. Guests often pay their local guide in the form of a present or skillshare up to the value of the booking, further personalising the whole experience.

“The new format means a traveller can offer to give their local, for example, a bottle of wine from their home country, or perhaps a lesson in juggling!” Clare believes they are the first “meet a local” platform to offer this arrangement and feels it adds a deeper element of connection to the experience.

Back in Kreuzberg, a DJ sets up on the pavement outside, the gallery opening spills out onto the street and yet another impromptu party has begun.

The vodka flows and you’re now in your own tiny gang, you and your brand-new friend. Ventures like My Plus One not only cater to a new kind of desire for today’s travellers, they make sure that the common thread of human connection is woven through the experience, reminding us that the world really is very small after all. 🍷

FOUNDER CLARE FREEMAN

