

# Traveling with Intention

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*Jill Hurd and Germaine van den Berg  
Photos courtesy of Jill Hurd*

## ***Co-Founded by Palisadian Jill Hurd, Cazavia Aims to Overhaul Travel Industry with a Focus on Sustainability and Revival***

By MARIE TABELA | *Contributing Writer*

The last few years have proven to be universally challenging. If one thing is true, it is that collectively, the world has gone through a shared experience no one ever thought possible.

*With Yandisa Ngcuka*

While everyone knows about the industries projected in all of the headlines that were impacted while in the throes of COVID-19

restrictions, there are countless others who suffered unimaginable loss who never get mentioned.

It is no secret that air travel, hotels and resorts, and restaurants were affected, but who is helping the people (often women) who were tasked with supporting their families and villages in faraway lands that relied almost entirely on tourism?

With travel being back in the picture for many, there are two seasoned women-of-the-world who have answered the call to action to help bring those precious dollars back to the people who could benefit the most, all while providing a top-of-the-line service to their clients.

Jill Hurd, who has lived in Pacific Palisades since 1995, and her business partner, Germaine van den Berg of Johannesburg, have teamed up to start Cazavia, a travel agency that strives to create once-in-a-lifetime trips for their clients that rebuild and refortify both the environments and cultures of their destinations.

Pre-pandemic, Hurd and van den Berg ran their own travel businesses in Los Angeles and Johannesburg, respectively. Hurd focused on entertainment travel for film and television with her company, JD Consulting, and later coordinated trips for architects and top graphic designers. Van den Berg opened Travel Logic, which caters to both private travelers looking for high-end travel plans as well as corporations looking for the best in travel management.

Their paths crossed roughly six years ago in Morocco on a work trip, and it was clear to them right away that their chance meeting would later determine their destiny with one another.

“We in the travel industry were decimated,” Hurd shared of when the pandemic hit. “We knew there was a larger meaning here, something much bigger than what was right in front of us. The travel industry has a large responsibility in what’s happening in the world, and how we’re depleting and managing resources.”

Hurd and van den Berg shared the same belief and philosophy that travel, and the way it had always been done, had to change.



*Participating in Project Soar*

The two hit the ground running, spending countless hours and sleepless nights connecting over Zoom to come back stronger than ever, but this time with a new goal: to introduce thoughtful travel with intention. They would rebuild, though it would look nothing like the way it did before.

“We saw what happened with COVID, and we saw how micro enterprises were really affected,” van den Berg explained. “[We saw] how the craftsperson in the middle of The Bush who did beadwork was affected. We decided we would try in our own way to change the travel intention. We wanted to focus not on ‘voluntourism,’ but on supporting organizations, companies and countries where tourism has a benefit.”

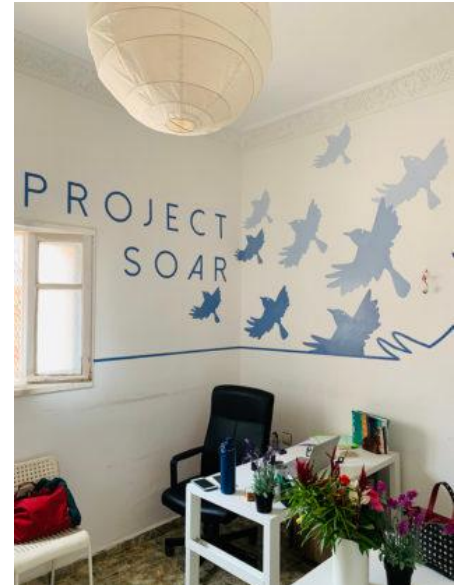
This was how the idea of traveling with intention came to be with the birth of Cazavia. The women of Cazavia specialize in creating trips that help rebuild the micro industries of the countries being visited, rather than funneling more tourism dollars into the well-known and heavily trafficked tourist sites around the world, which sometimes abuse the resources, people and land they occupy.

They also work hard to schedule trips during off-season times, so as not to place such a heavy burden on this planet grappling with climate change. When traveling on a specially curated trip by Cazavia, the goal is for the client to feel good knowing that simply by having a once-in-a-lifetime travel experience, they are actually benefiting the people and environments of the countries they visit.

With a combined 60 years of travel industry experience, Hurd and van den Berg are genuine experts in finding the best of the best that the world has to offer through their partnerships. One such partner Cazavia works closely with is Wilderness Safaris, which offers travel experiences in Botswana, Kenya, Namibia, Rwanda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

“I went on [my] honeymoon with Wilderness Safaris back in 1999, and they’re at the top of the bar,” Hurd shared. “Nothing has compared since. I have witnessed them grow, mature and commit harder in everything they do in preservation and beauty. They really walk the talk in wanting to do better.”

“The company doesn’t move to any destination in terms of product or itinerary if that product won’t make a difference in the lives of the people or help us conserve the destination,” elaborated Yandisa Ngcuka, Wilderness



*Project Soar works to empower young women.*





Safaris North America sales manager. “Our purpose is to conserve and restore. It is etched in our DNA.

“We make sure to create life-changing journeys so that people talk about us and know who we are, but knowing that when they come here, they’re contributing and it’s so much bigger than just going on holiday.”

Ngcuka went on to explain that during the dinners and social times at the camps, guests, as well as the guides who lead the safaris and hosts of the camps, come together, share their life experiences and connect on a much deeper level—just as van den Berg and Hurd did all those years ago over a dinner table in Morocco. Lifelong bonds are formed, and bridges are connected from all around the world.

Recently, Ngcuka visited Hurd in Pacific Palisades so she could have a chance to show him her own village and the beauty it has to offer. The table they chose to share together? Well, one at Café Vida, of course.

Building such bridges and bringing people together at the table is a deeply personal theme of Cazavia: Another experience Cazavia is offering is By Invitation—a group trip for women from all over to come together and share a travel experience.

Hurd and van den Berg reflected so fondly on their chance meeting in Morocco and the evenings in the camps with Wilderness Safaris, and they hope to bring that same experience to other women.

The first By Invitation group was set to travel on September 30 to Morocco, with one traveler from Dallas and two from the Palisades.

“There is a lot of power in bringing women together and supporting one another, and doing it while you’re traveling just expands on that,” Hurd explained. “It’s a very amplified experience.”

With a vision for expanding to other groups in the future, the new concept is currently focusing on groups of only women. As the travelers do not all know one another, each potential traveler has a meeting with Cazavia to ensure a proper fit for a cohesive group with like-minded expectations.

“We do different destinations, at all times keeping to our core focus of no over-tourism, not going to places with too many people, and looking for the hidden gems that you don’t just see in a brochure or on YouTube,” van den Berg explained.



Cazavia goes even further to ensure that their clients' travels benefit more than just the client. A portion of the profits from every trip goes to Project Soar, an organization that works to empower young women of Morocco (and now Syria and Uganda as well) by providing them with resources to help them create lives that allow them to escape very real threats of child marriage, early motherhood and being denied an education. When seeing how hard young girls' lives can be around the world, Hurd and van den Berg knew that they needed to lend a helping hand.

"We've approached travel so differently," van den Berg shared. "It's more about [the fact that] we're in this position right now so that we can be there for others through our clients and mutual clients so that people on the ground can benefit. People enjoy it so much more when they're traveling and their dollars are being used for a purpose."

With the opportunity to sit back and take a hard look at what is important in life and the world as a whole, Hurd and van den Berg were able to create something bigger than themselves. Cazavia strives to bring people together, build global bridges and bring the world back to a better place.

When the focus shifts from the self to the greater good and humanity as a whole, then those bridges remain strong, and the world really does begin to heal.