



GRAVEL TRAVEL
destinations off the beaten track

TREATMENT



Pichu Productions



GRAVEL TRAVEL

Title: Gravel Travel – Destinations off the Beaten Track

Genre: Travel documentary series

Length: 6 x 30mins (net)

Reporter: Michael Wigge

Production Company: Pichu Productions

Production period: Approx. 15 days per episode

Special features: Reporter films himself.

The reporter observes but also gets involved in local events.

Each region is presented with a combination of series journalism and light-hearted entertainment.





Treatment Summary

In the documentary series Gravel Travel, Michael Wigge takes the viewer to destinations off the beaten track. He spotlights places which haven't yet been discovered by the tourist market due to the general perception that they are too dangerous, climatically extreme, uninteresting or are just simply unknown.

Wigge blends in-depth journalism with entertainment and his unconventional approach takes viewers on a unique journey.

Michael Wigge's distinctive style of talking directly into his handheld camera establishes an intimacy between the viewer and the reporter. This means of communication alternates with calm scenic shots and interviews with locals.

Graphical elements conveying background information about the respective region or country add to the series' richness.





Elements

- Interviews: The main stylistic element is well informed interviews with local people.
- Action: Wigge not only observes he also gets involved. During the first episode he looks out for an orthodox Jew in order to challenge him to an arm wrestling match.
- Surveys: Wigge questions passers-by on issues of local concern.
- Objectives: In each episode Wigge sets himself a task and as a result gets to know the region better. For example: In the first episode he sets the objective that during the filming he has to do something which will support peace in the region.
- Street Challenge: In every episode Wigge tests the knowledge of four passers-by on one of the region's important issues.
- Statements: Wigge communicates his thoughts and impressions directly into the camera.





Graphics

- Animated graphics: During the first episode a 30 second animation explains the history of the conflict between the people of Israel and the Arab world.
- Factual graphics: Graphics appearing throughout the documentary showing short written facts will add to the informational quality of the programme.
- Maps: Illustrate Wigge's journey through the country or region.





Reporter / Producer

Name: Michael Wigge

Born: 1976

Reporter, Filmmaker, Presenter

Has travelled 50 countries

Clients: WDR, ARD, Deutsche Welle, Sat 1, RTL 2, GEO, MTV, Viva

Michael Wigge has been working as a reporter, presenter and producer for both private and public television broadcasters for over six years. His work is characterised by a mixture of serious journalism and light-hearted entertainment. His area of expertise lies in cultural topics, which he approaches in an entertaining fashion. Since 2007, he produces the series 'The Truth about Germany' on Deutsche Welle TV. In 2008, he was awarded platinum for this series in the category "On-Air Personality" at the 41st WorldFest Houston International Film Festival. He was also shortlisted for a prize at the New York Film Festival. For 'Gravel Travel' he applies his experience from 'The Truth about Germany' and takes the stylistic elements of that format a step further in order to explore unusual travel destinations all over the world.

Michael Wigge belongs to a rare breed of TV reporters who successfully convey in-depth journalism in an entertaining and humorous way. 'Gravel Travel' is proof of his ability to inform and entertain the viewers.

Pichu Productions
Michael Wigge

www.pichu-productions.com
info@pichu-productions.com





Suggestions for Future Episodes

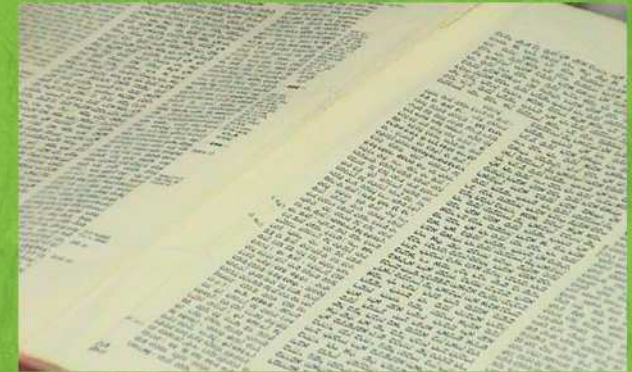
- Colombia

Most Travellers steer clear of Colombia as this republic in the northern part of South America has a reputation tarnished by drug scandals and kidnappings. Wigge shows the outstanding beauty of the Colombian scenery as well as trying to understand the country's internal conflicts. He finds out which parts are safer than others and explains the reasons for this.



- Northern Ireland

Even today Northern Ireland isn't considered a travel destination. Political and religious conflict still dominates the country's image. While the Republic of Ireland experienced a stunning economic upswing during the last decade which also led to an increase in tourism, Northern Ireland's economy continues to lag behind the European average. Wigge travels through the region to discover its beauty and understand to what extent the conflict is a thing of the past.





Suggestions for Future Episodes

- Yanomami Indians/Brazil

The 20,000 strong Yanomami tribe is the largest indigenous tribe in South America. Even today there are villages along the Brazilian-Venezuelan border still untouched by the outside world. The average height of an adult Yanomami is only 5 feet. They live free from crime, psychological problems or pressure to succeed. Wigge tries to live as a tribe member in their village amidst the rainforest and shows just how different their lifestyle and culture are from ours. He also wonders whether the cultural differences might be too big for European tourists to travel there.



- Suriname

The Republic of Suriname is located in South America. To the east it is bordered by French Guiana, to the south by Brazil and to the west by Guyana. With its geographical size of 163,820 km², Suriname is the smallest independent country in South America. It's so infrequently travelled that not even a Lonely Planet guide has been published about it.

The population of the Republic of Suriname is ethnically heterogeneous, which also shows in their religious affiliations and various languages.

The biggest groups among the population are:

27.4% (135,117 people) of Indian origin.

17.7% (87,202 people) consider themselves Creole.

14.7% (72,553 people) come from Maroon tribes.

14.6% (71,879 people) are Javanese.

12.5% (61,524 people) belong to a mixed group.

Suriname is a model example for a peaceful multicultural society. Wigge travels the country to discover the different cultural groups and how they live together.





Suggestions for Future Episodes

- Oymyakon/Siberia

Oymyakon is a settlement of 800 residents. It's located in the north-east of Siberia and is the coldest, permanently inhabited place on earth. The surrounding highlands are at an average altitude of 750 m above sea level. To the south, the west and the east it's shielded by mountain ranges which prevent mild air masses reaching Oymyakon. A record low temperature of -71.2°C (-96.2°F) has been recorded. Even in January 2008 the temperatures were below 60 degrees centigrade. In temperatures like these it is not possible to pour a glass of water on the ground, because it freezes in midair. Wigge takes a look around town and tries to find the charms which persuade the inhabitants to continue living in such a harsh environment.



- Chernobyl

In April 1986, Chernobyl witnessed the world's worst nuclear disaster. Thousands of people have since died due to the nuclear fall-out. Today there is still a 30 km exclusion zone around the reactor. Due to the existing high radiation levels, one is only allowed to enter the so-called "Zone of Alienation" with a special permit. Wigge visits this "no man's land" and meets locals who have since returned to the area.





Suggestions for Future Episodes

- Turkmenistan

'Turkmenbashi - the father of all Turkmen' – died in 2006. The self-appointed Turkmenbashi led an anachronistic personality cult unequalled in the world. He gave his name to countless buildings, even to a meteorite and also renamed weekdays and months. The month of April, for example, was called after his mother. At the same time he spent enormous sums on preposterous projects like a man-made lake in the desert and an ice-skating rink near the capital. He wrote his own Bible which became compulsory reading for all Turkmen. During the eccentric leader's 15 year dictatorship Turkmenistan remained widely untravelled. Wigge looks for the remains of Turkmenbashi's legacy and tries to find out how the Turkmen people live today.



- Bhopal/India

December 3rd 1984 saw India suffer its worst industrial disaster as the pesticide plant in Bhopal released 42 tonnes of toxic gas into the atmosphere. It is not difficult to find victims of the tragedy in the city of 1.5 million inhabitants. On the outskirts of the city there is a poverty stricken district called "Widows' Colony" where women tell their tragic stories of miscarriages and men of their lost families. Officially 20,000 deaths have been attributed to the gas leakage. Wigge travels to Bhopal to highlight the victims present day plight and immerse himself in a community whose suffering shows no signs of abating.





Suggestions for Future Episodes

- Trans-Dniester

Trans-Dniester is a part of Moldavia situated east of the river Dniester. This region has declared independence, formed its own government as an autonomous state and has its own currency. Since it is not recognised by any country or international organisation as a sovereign state, Trans-Dniester is considered to be a stabilised de facto-regime since the 1992 Trans-Dniester conflict. Wigge travels through this region of Moldavia to meet the self-appointed leaders and to understand the needs of the people.



- Albania

Albania is located in the heart of Europe. Nevertheless, it is widely unknown to European travellers. Not even the newly established air connections by low-cost airlines could change that. In April 2008 Albania was invited by NATO to join the organisation in 2009. The country also wants to join the EU. But who are these Albanians? Wigge explores the country and finds out why it hasn't yet been discovered by the tourist market. He spotlights its little-known and beautiful sides.



- Bhutan

The kingdom of Bhutan is a country in the Himalayas. It is roughly the size of Switzerland, but the population is less than ten percent of the Alpine state's. Foreigners are only allowed to enter the small country, located between Nepal and China, when they pay a daily fee of 200 US dollars. 2008 saw dramatic changes, with the king of Bhutan implementing a democratic, constitutional monarchy, resulting in a significant reduction in the ruler's powers. Wigge finds out what's myth and what's truth in the Buddhist country where the wellbeing of the people is supposed to be the main goal of its government. Wigge shows the radical changes taking place in Bhutan at the moment.

