



Joanna Lumley's Spice Trail Adventure



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Joanna Lumley sets off on one of her most epic voyages yet, a journey through the world's greatest spice continents to discover the rich tapestry of flavours and cultures which have shaped our world. Touring Indonesia, Zanzibar, India and Madagascar, Joanna explores the centuries-old spice trade in this brand new four-part series of discovery.

Joanna's spice journey begins in a remote Indonesian island, Banda, which was once the only place on earth where nutmeg grew. Joanna meets a family who make their living from harvesting nutmeg before uncovering the dark history of Banda's past as well as the charm that led to its A-list appeal.

From there, Joanna's travels will follow the legendary spice trail to her birthplace, India, in search of a kitchen cupboard staple once known as 'black gold'. Starting in the majestic ancient city of Hampi, she is invited to a dazzling Hindu festival by a local rock climber before heading onwards to the lush backwaters of Kerala.

The next stop is the African island of Madagascar, travelling overland on the country's notorious pot-holed roads on the trail of the second most expensive spice in the world, vanilla. Joanna discovers the secrets of the spice from the unique way it's grown to how it's dealt on the streets. She searches for gold with a poor gold-mining community and finds out how cacao is used to make some of the world's best chocolate.

The last leg of Joanna's spice trail takes her to the vast plains of Wadi Rum in Jordan on the back of a camel, before her journey ends at the one of the great wonders of the world, the ancient city of Petra, to discover how the movement of spices and people still affects the world today.

Produced by Burning Bright Productions.

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EPISODE SUMMARIES

Episode 1 – Indonesia

Joanna Lumley sets off on one her most epic voyages yet. A journey through the world's greatest spice continents. In this episode Joanna is heading to a collection of remote Indonesian islands, so small that her first challenge is finding them on the map. The Banda Islands were one the only place on earth where nutmeg grew. Joanna meets a family who make their living from harvesting them, she uncovers the dark history of Banda's past and discovers that Banda's charms once attracted A listers, including Mick Jagger. In the capital of Indonesia, Jakarta Joanna finds out what the attraction is of the 200 million clove cigarettes that are smoked in Indonesia every day. She pops into a cool speakeasy bar to taste a cocktail that is all about the spice and ends up discovering a newfound love of Indonesia's national pop music.

Episode 2 – India

Joanna Lumley follows the legendary spice trail to discover the rich tapestry of flavours and cultures which have shaped our world. In this episode, Joanna returns to her birthplace, India, in search of a kitchen cupboard staple once known as 'black gold'. Starting in the majestic ancient city of Hampi, she's invited to a dazzling Hindu festival by a local rock climber. Onwards to the lush backwaters of Kerala where she meets a great grandmother who teaches the oldest martial art in the world and spends the night in a magical houseboat inspired by the old spice traders.

Episode 3 – Madagascar

Joanna Lumley's spice journey continues on the African island of Madagascar. Travelling overland on the country's notorious pot-holed roads, she discovers the secrets of the world's second most expensive spice, vanilla. From the unique way it's grown to how it's dealt on the streets. She searches for gold with a poor gold-mining community and finds out how cacao is used to make some of the world's best chocolate. The trip ends on the tourist island of Nosy Be, where the men participate in a dangerous martial art called Morengy and the women are paving the way for female equality.

Episode 4 – Zanzibar & Jordan

The last leg of Joanna Lumley's journey takes her by dhow to Zanzibar, the spice island of Africa where merchants from around the world have left their mark on the architecture, religion and music. Finally, she travels to Jordan where the spice trail continued on land. She explores the vast plains of Wadi Rum from the back of a camel, meets one of the last nomadic Bedouin families and visits Za'atari refugee camp, home to Jordan's newest arrivals. Her journey ends at the one of the great wonders of the world, the ancient city of Petra.



PRESS PACK INTERVIEW: Joanna Lumley

How did the idea for the Spice Trail Adventure come about?

The original idea was to follow the story of spices, because in this country we can now get every spice under the sun and we revel in them. But we used to only have salt and pepper and mustard and that was about it. For this trip we thought, let's see where all these astonishing spices came from and how they came to be in this country and the history of that. We had done the silk road adventure and so we called this series the spice trail, because there is something about spices, that they are usually ground into powder when we get them, that had a gorgeous sense of following a trail of them.

Where did this journey take you?

We started in Indonesia with nutmeg, then Southern India for ginger, black pepper and turmeric, Madagascar of course for vanilla, which incredibly we learned is pollinated by hand, and then to Zanzibar, which became the great trading station on to the ships and out to sea to Jordan, which was our final destination. It was a fascinating journey across the world to many places I had never visited before. Following that trail took us far, far away to such remote places, like the beautiful Banda islands in Indonesia, where the only nutmeg trees in the world were grown.

Did you do a lot of research into the history of the spice trade in preparation?

I always try to do a lot of research and I always keep notebooks and diaries so that I have a reference of everything. My house is like a treasure trove of travel memories that I collect - stones, huge feathers and shells and so on. I just love all those things. But beforehand, no matter how much research you do, you learn a lot more along the way. I'm very pro-travel because you can only learn so much from paper. You need to learn from people. And the kindness and generosity of strangers never fails to touch me when I travel. We are all the same. That love and trust in human nature is reinforced every time I go abroad.

Did anything surprise you about the value of some of the spices?

With nutmeg, the Banda islands used to trade with the Chinese, Indians and Arabs and the Europeans were late to the game – the Dutch, Portugese and then the English were all desperate to get hold of this incredible spice. Which at the time was even believed to be able to cure the plague, so it was truly fought over. They say that from one sack of nutmeg, you were set up for about 10 years, it was so valuable. Sailors crossed the entire world to get to these islands, like the real-life treasure island, it was quite bewitching.

What did you discover about the darker side of the spice trade?

There is a very dark side to this story, we all know about colonialism which has been going on since time began. Somebody going somewhere else and saying, 'I like what you've got, I'll take it'. In those days



people were killed and treated abominably as slaves. It was very violent and a dreadful time and seeing paintings depicting that on this trip broke my heart. But it was in every country of the world. It was important for us to acknowledge that in this series.

What did you take away from this trip?

Ultimately, how lucky we are to have access to these thrilling spices and the ability to cook with them, the range of different cuisines and the influences we have because of them. I now treat spices with such respect, knowing what goes into harvesting and caring for them. I have so much respect for the people who grow them. It's pure magic.

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