

ITINERANT ITALIAN

Hong Kong–based adventurer **Andrea Oschetti** left the corporate world more than a decade ago, reinventing himself as chef of a private kitchen, a travel photographer and writer, TEDx speaker, and now, “dream maker” at the months-old luxury travel outfit Blueflower (*blueflower.la*). Here, he speaks to us about three of his passions: travel, books, and food.



● **WHAT IS BLUEFLOWER ALL ABOUT?**

The Blue Flower is a central symbol of Romanticism which represents the search for personal fulfillment. My passion is to share the life-enriching, transformative power of travel with other people, so that's why I started this company. We have more than 40 itineraries all over the world, and to customize them we depend on members of what I call the Blueflower Collective.

It's a global community of like-minded, creative individuals—they are chefs, journalists, artists, and so on—my contacts from 10 years of working as a travel writer and photographer. Two examples are the leading archaeologist Damian Evans, who will narrate the history of Angkor over dinner before a visit to the temples, and in Italy, the culinary philosopher and wine specialist Gaetano Saccoccio.

● **NAME ONE TRAVEL EXPERIENCE THAT TOOK YOUR BREATH AWAY.** Riding a bicycle on the Silk Road from Italy to China, through deserts and steppes, alpine valleys and high mountain passes. The weather varied from furnace-like heat to numbing cold and biting winds. Besides the physical demands of the trip, I also had to confront the bureaucratic certainties and political uncertainties of Central Asia. I chose my route in order to follow some of the great journeys in history: those of Marco Polo, Genghis Khan, Xuan Zang, Alexander the Great, and Tamerlane.

● **IS THERE ONE PLACE THAT DRAWS YOU BACK AGAIN AND AGAIN?** The Himalayas. I've always been more of a mountain person and my favorite activity is hiking. Seeing the Himalayas leaves me with a feeling of awe. They remind us of something greater than us, and that puts us back in our place. The mountains also appeal to my sense of aesthetics: I love Japanese and Chinese ink paintings, the tension between emptiness and clarity, what you see and don't see. Then you have the spiritual aspect: even if you don't believe in the local religions, you can still learn a lot from how they are practiced.

● **WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE TRAVEL WRITER?** At the beginning of the 19th century, with the Great Game [a confrontation between Britain and Russia] shifting eastward, Central Asia became the focus of a generation of brave explorers. One of them was Sven Hedin, an exceptionally determined and strong Swedish man. The adventures recorded in his self-illustrated autobiography, *My Life as an Explorer* (1925), impacted me deeply as a teenager. This was a real person, but it read like a book of fiction! I was amazed because he was absolutely crazy. Sven and his companions tried to find this city in the desert, then they passed a 7,000-meter mountain and he said, “Hey, let's climb it!” So you can say he was a little bit of an Indiana Jones.

● **HOW DOES BEING CHEF OF A PRIVATE KITCHEN INFORM YOUR TRAVELS?** Through food, I'm able to understand a place even better than by reading a guidebook. Let's take dim sum as an example: the sheer variety of ingredients, textures, flavors, and cooking methods tells you that Chinese culture values balance and harmony. If you're an observant foodie—not just one who likes to try new dishes—you can see things and make connections where most other people can't. ●