

Holly Rubenstein

The host of *The Travel Diaries* podcast talks about growing up on a farm in Cranleigh and her favourite 'hidden gems' across the county

INTERVIEW: Rebecca Younger

Where is home to you?

I was born and grew up in Box Hill and then we moved to Cranleigh, where my mum still lives. I loved growing up in Surrey. Whenever I drive out of London, down the A3 and come off at Guildford and get nearer Cranleigh, my shoulders drop a little and I feel I can breathe. I've been very lucky to spend lockdown here.

What are your fondest childhood memories?

I grew up on a farm in Cranleigh and the school holidays were about having friends round to watch the sheep being shorn and playing in the fields and I'm very grateful for all of that.

How did the *Travel Diaries* podcast come about?

I was originally an entertainment journalist doing red carpets and junkets. Whenever I went to interview A-listers about their films I could tell they were bored of answering the same questions. But, if you asked them something that was a bit of a curve ball, they really lit up. I love hearing recommendations of where other people have travelled to and I just knew there would be a real market of people wanting to listen to the experiences of others when it comes to travel. So that's where the idea came from.

You are now four series in, and it's the UK's number one travel podcast...

It's mad to me. It been downloaded over a million times and is now listened to in 160 countries. It's also number one in Ireland, Albania and Slovenia so it's been interesting to see the places it really resonates.



Photo: Holly Rubenstein

ABOVE: Holly has spent lockdown on her family farm in Cranleigh

Which is your favourite episode?

Probably Simon Reeve because he's such an avid traveller – he's visited almost all the countries in the world so he had a lot to choose from but what I found amazing was the back story. What I find so interesting in speaking to people about their travel experiences is that you end up unravelling so much about their lives because travel, in many ways, punctuates our lives.

Who's on your hitlist?

David Attenborough because, inspired by him, I studied anthropology at the same university as he did. This season I'm interviewing his cameraman so that will be interesting as he has travelled with him for over 20 years.

What are your favourite places in Surrey?

When people first come to Surrey with me, the first place I take

them is Shere. It's so charming and quaint and we all get excited about the film references. Chiddingfold is my favourite place in Surrey – I'd like to live on the green. I also love Hascombe – my favourite pub is The White Horse. There's a beautiful country lane that extends beyond the pub to a lake not many people know about.

Any other hidden gems?

Hambledon's so idyllic with its post office, where you can sit and have a coffee outside.

Best place to stay?

I visited The Mitre Hotel in East Molesey recently and was blown away but if I were to splash out on a long weekend I would say Beaverbrook. It's my favourite staycation spot in the whole of the UK. ♦

The fourth series of *The Travel Diaries* is out now on all podcast outlets:

thetraveldiariespodcast.com