

Muhazi Belt



George Baguma

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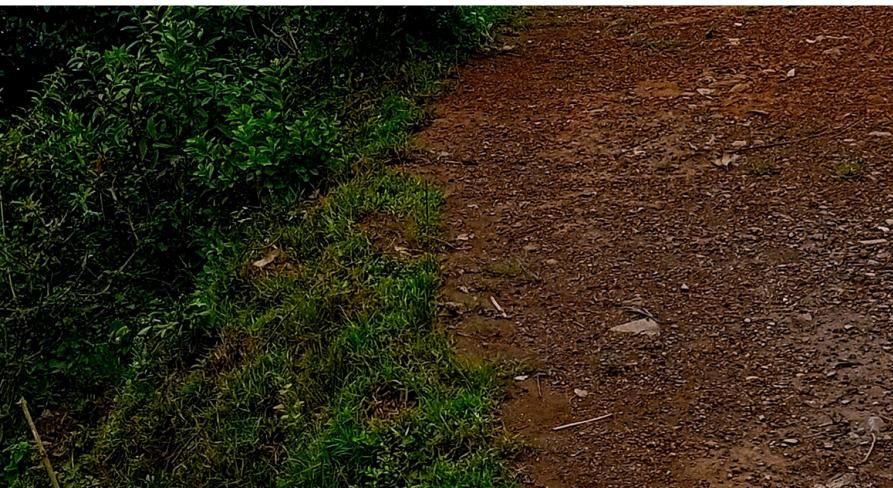
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HELLO MUHAZI



Before this tour, Lake Muhazi was already familiar to me in fragments. I had visited resorts along its shores, swum in its waters, and taken part in various water sports. I had even seen it from the sky. From that bird's-eye view, the lake revealed a striking form—like a tree laid gently across the earth, its narrow body stretching outward, with offshoots branching quietly in different directions. The shape lingered in my mind long after the flight.

Curiosity followed. I wanted to know the lake beyond isolated moments and scenic vantage points. When the idea of circling it on two wheels crossed my mind, I didn't hesitate. Riding around Muhazi felt like the most honest way to understand it—slowly, attentively, and close to the water. Completing the full loop revealed something unexpected: throughout the journey, I never saw a river flowing into the lake. I only encountered its outlet, where Muhazi releases its waters and continues its story downstream.

How the lake was formed, and how it sustains itself, are questions for another expedition. For now, this book is an invitation—to follow the shoreline, to pause where the trail allows, and to experience the adventure, the activities, the quiet sojourns, the sunsets, and the ever-changing scenery of a uniquely shaped body of water.

TURNING PAGES BEFORE HITTING THE ROAD

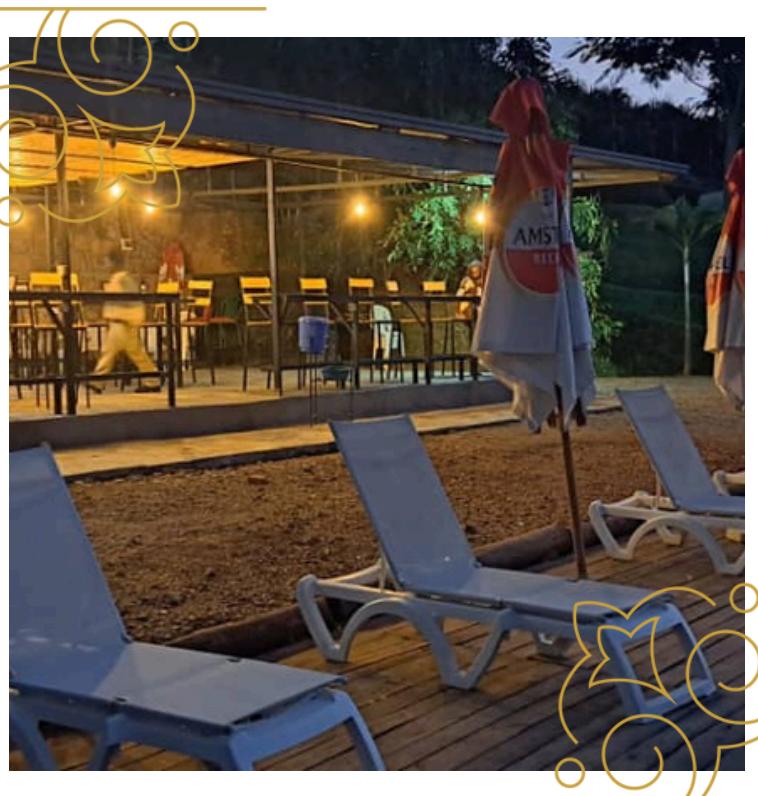


This memorable tour set off at Kingfisher Resort, nestled on the Gasabo side of the lake. Before the ride began, I hosted a small book club session with a group of tour operators, centered around a book titled *The Akagera Expedition*.

This was a particularly engaging discussion because the participants were professionals deeply familiar with Akagera National Park. For them, the park is not an occasional destination but an extension of their daily work. Discussing the book with such a knowledgeable audience turned the session into a rich exchange, adding practical insights and deepening my understanding of the park and its wildlife.

After the session, I geared up and hit the trail. Leaving the resort behind, I followed the road as it traced the edges of Lake Muhazi. Long and winding in form, the lake immediately set the tone for the journey ahead. Gasabo marked the starting point of a ride that promised discovery, reflection, and a deeper appreciation of this ribbon of water stretching across the surrounding landscapes.

STUMBLING UPON A HIDDEN GEM



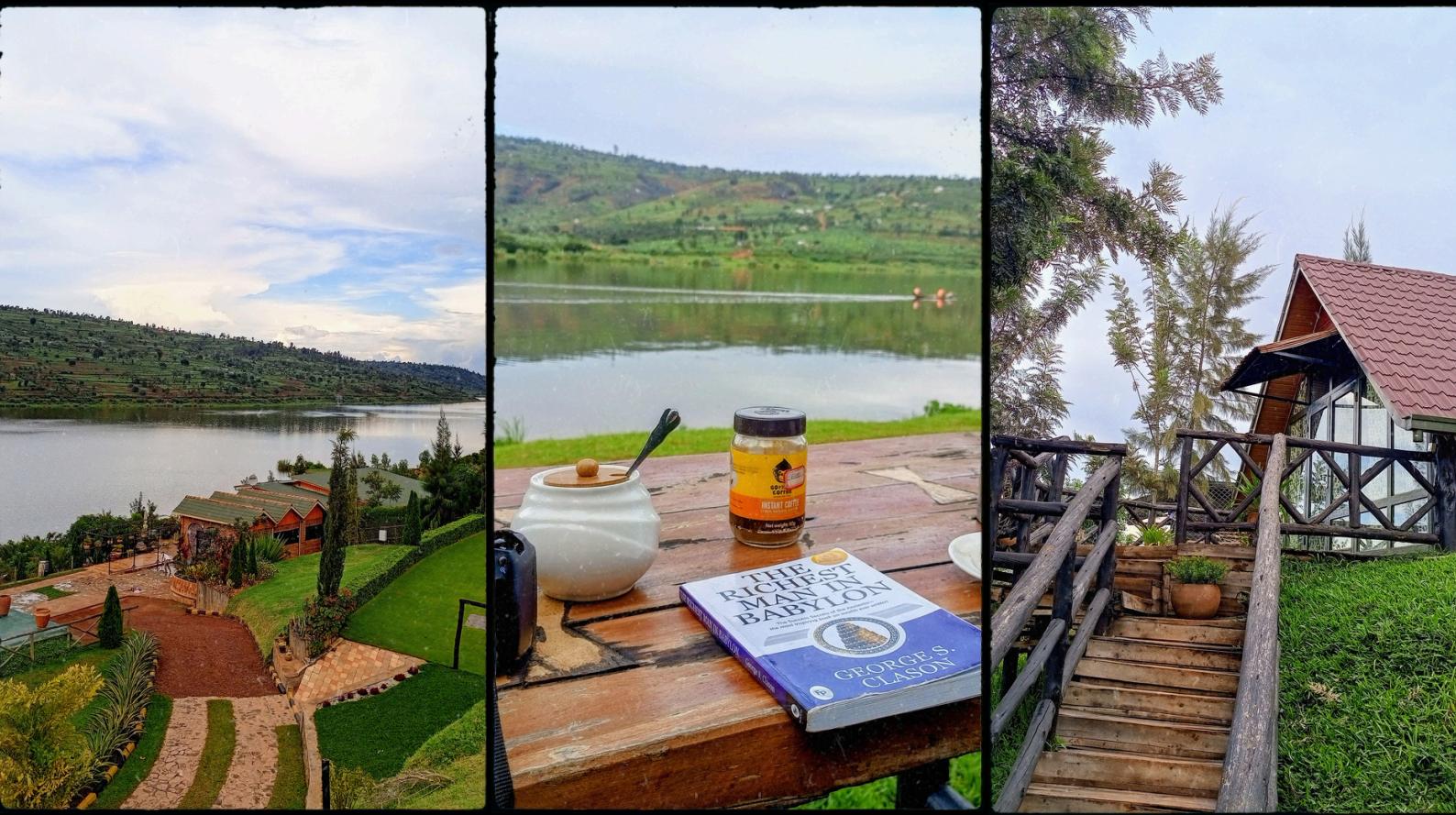
From Kingfisher Resort, I followed a scenic trail hugging the lake closely. On this stretch, it's so narrow that it looks like a river. From the very beginning, I was awestruck by the allure of the setting and sensed that this tour would be something special.

A short distance along the trail, curiosity nudged me toward Inyanja Resort. It wasn't a planned stop—just one of those instinctive turns that would come to define much of the trip. In fact, I didn't even know the place existed until I found myself there.

I didn't linger long. Inyanja was simply a brief interlude, not a destination, but that was precisely its beauty. It set the tone for the journey ahead, a gentle reminder that around Lake Muhazi, the most memorable moments often arrive unannounced.

By chance, the investor behind Inyanja Resort was on-site. We shared a brief conversation in a bar overlooking the lake, where he spoke about a vision for the Muhazi Belt rooted in thoughtful development. Before resuming the ride, I took a short walk around the property, aware that this unplanned stop offered an early glimpse into how the Muhazi Belt is quietly taking shape.

THE GOOD MOOD STATE OF MIND



Crossing out of Gasabo and into the Rwamagana stretch of the shoreline, I had no clear idea where I would spend my first night. There was no rush shaping my decisions. My pace was slow, allowing the road to unfold without pressure. Eventually, I found myself at Good Mood Beach Resort.

Upon arrival, I was taken on a short tour of the resort. The bar and restaurant sit near the parking area, setting the tone from the very beginning. Beyond that, the grounds open up into modern sports facilities, manicured gardens, and quiet corners. The tour ended with a glimpse into accommodation units—subtle reminders of the finer things in life.

Finally, I settled into the lower garden by the water, coffee within reach and a book open on the table. Every so often, I looked up to watch a canoe glide effortlessly across Lake Muhazi, or a curious flock of ducks gather along the shoreline. I snapped a few photos, then returned to the world the book carried me into. Reading in the middle of a long, around-Muhazi journey felt natural—because Muhazi, at its best, is meant to be experienced slowly.

RECHARGING MY BODY AND DEVICES



Later in the afternoon, the road led me to Umuko Lodge. Upon arrival, I took off my boots and slipped into a pair of flip-flops. After checking in, I let the rest of the afternoon unfold without an agenda, as the views, the serenity, and the gentle breeze worked their magic.

From my balcony, the lake stretched out quietly below, framed by rolling hills under a clear sky. The soft wind moved through the space, carrying birdsong and the subtle rustle of leaves. Everything felt calm and unforced, in a way that felt distinctly Muhazi.

As evening settled in, the lodge grew even quieter. The light softened over the hills, and the lake gradually shifted from bright blues to deeper, muted tones. I lingered outdoors for a while, watching the day wind down, listening as nature took over the soundscape. There was nothing to plan and nowhere else to be—just the quiet satisfaction of having arrived and the comfort of letting the day end on its own terms.

I woke up the next morning fully recharged, ready for the next chapter of the journey. Before checking out, I spent some quiet time by the pool, laptop open, thoughts flowing easily. The morning freshness made it the right time to take care of one assignment before setting off again.

SLOWING DOWN THE PACE



I could have walked to Vox Wagen Campsite from Umuko Lodge in just a few minutes. I hadn't planned to stay—only to stop by and say hello to the owner. We sat on the deck of his wooden vessel, now grounded by the shore, talking as the lake stretched out before us. One conversation led to another, and before I realized it, the sun was already sinking behind the distant hills.

After dinner, I climbed down the stairs of the same vessel and slept in one of the rooms tucked below deck. Day two unfolded slowly. Later in the afternoon, we took to the lake for an exhilarating boat ride, gliding across the water toward the Gatsibo side. At some point, we switched off the engine and let the boat drift freely. The silence and the gentle motion were deeply refreshing.



As evening approached, we stayed out longer than planned, sailing through another spectacular sunset. That night, I slept in a Volkswagen Kombi converted into an en-suite room—one of several classic Volkswagen vehicles reimagined as living spaces.

When it was finally time to say goodbye, it was hard to believe how a quick hello had turned into a multi-night stay. Around Muhazi, the lake softens the sense of time, gently rewarding those who choose to stay a little longer.



TRADING THE ROAD FOR WAVES



When I finally left Musha, I rolled on toward Gishali. My first stop was Ma Campagne Resort, where I decided to lean into a different kind of movement—jet skiing.

Initially, I rode as a passenger behind the instructor, easing into the rhythm as the jet ski sliced through the water. Once I found my balance, I took the handles myself and cruised freely across Lake Muhazi. The sensation felt familiar—I had simply traded the road for waves. The balance, the responsiveness, and the adrenaline rush echoed what I experience every day on two wheels.

Spray rose behind me as I skimmed across open water, the wind pressing forward and the hills unfolding in wide panoramas. It was exhilarating—a sharp contrast to the still mornings and slow rhythms that had defined much of the journey so far. In that moment, Lake Muhazi revealed another side of itself, where thrill and movement coexist effortlessly with calm, welcoming every pace—from unhurried glides to full speed.

TRYING MY HAND AT GOLF



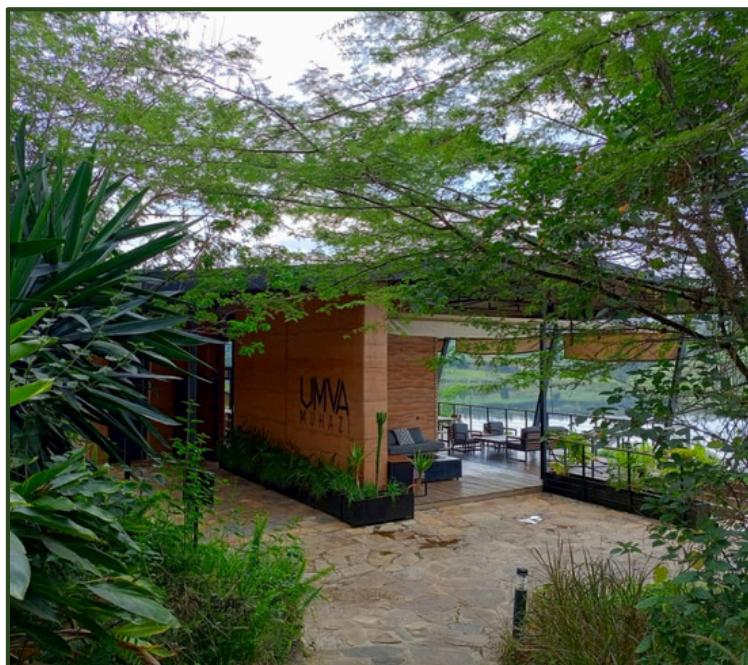
My next stop was Falcon Golf & Country Club, just a short distance from Ma Campagne Resort. After the rush of jet skiing, this visit introduced a different kind of challenge—one rooted in patience, precision, and quiet focus.

During my previous visit, I stood at the edge of the fairway, watching seasoned players move across the green with a measured rhythm. This time, however, I stepped onto the course with a club in hand, ready to try the game myself. Under the guidance of an instructor, I learned the basics—stance, grip, and the subtle mechanics of a golf swing. Each attempt carried its own lesson, demanding a balance between concentration and release.

There was something quietly rewarding about walking the gentle greens against the backdrop of the shimmering lake, each swing echoing softly across the water and toward the hills beyond. This game doesn't demand speed or strength; it invites presence and reflection.

Leaving the course, I carried not only a new skill, but a deeper way of relating to the lake—the steady presence that had drawn me here and anchored the entire journey.

BLISSFUL MOMENTS AT EVERY TURN



From Gishali, I bypassed Rwamagana town and continued toward Muhazi Sector. My stop at UMVA Muhazi was brief by design—a chance to look around rather than settle in. Although the journey around Lake Muhazi had been intentionally unhurried, I had begun to feel the need to pick up the pace. Other projects were waiting, and time was no longer on my side.

Even so, the place left an impression. The structures sat quietly within dense greenery, linked by stone paths and wooden walkways that followed the land rather than reshaping it. I took an easy walk along these paths, eventually reaching decks that hovered just above the water. Kayaks rested nearby, tempting me to linger a little longer, but the journey demanded that I keep moving.

I sat on one of the decks for a while, reconnecting with the lake I had been building an affinity with throughout the journey. There were no boats in sight, no hum of engines—just still water and the quiet presence of the surroundings. It felt intentional, perhaps guided by the property's environmental approach. Even in a short visit, it was clear that care for the lake and its ecosystem had shaped how the space was imagined. Activity around it was gently restrained.

A COFFEE BREAK BEFORE CURVING TO THE OTHER SIDE



When I left UMVA Muhazi, I crossed into Kayonza District. At the time, I hadn't realized the Rwamagana shoreline had claimed the lion's share of my time around the lake.

I swung through Kayonza town and took the left turn toward Gatsibo. My only stop in Kayonza was a familiar one—a quick coffee break at Jambo Beach. This was a place I knew well, one I often stopped at when using this route. With lunch already planned at Sista's Art Gallery, the stopover was intentionally short. I simply honored one of my travel rituals—a coffee break—before getting back on the road.

Leaving Jambo Beach without savoring its trademark tilapia felt like a missed opportunity. It's the kind of place that invites you to linger over cold ones while the chef prepares the latest catch from the very lake you're gazing at. But with the day already mapped out ahead, I settled for coffee and carried on—aware that some stops are meant to be revisited, not rushed.

STEPPING INTO THE PICTURE



It was still early when I left Kayonza and followed the trail that hugs the lake even more intimately, stretching from Kiramuruzi to Cyamutara. But let's slow down—because a lot unfolded between those two ends.

On the Gatsibo side, I noticed the lake's quieter stretch beginning to stir, as if gently waking up and easing into the rhythm of the broader Muhazi Belt. From across the water, I could see places I had visited earlier while navigating the Rwamagana shoreline. Seeing them from a distance—familiar yet removed—made something click. It was in those moments that I realized I had gathered something lasting, memories stitched quietly into the journey.

Somewhere along the way, I made a brief stop at an accommodation facility that hadn't yet opened its doors. Construction crews were putting the final touches in place, the property suspended in that calm moment between preparation and arrival. It felt like a quiet confirmation of what I was sensing all along: this side of the lake may still be finding its pace, but it is steadily discovering its own footing.

THE FINAL STRETCH

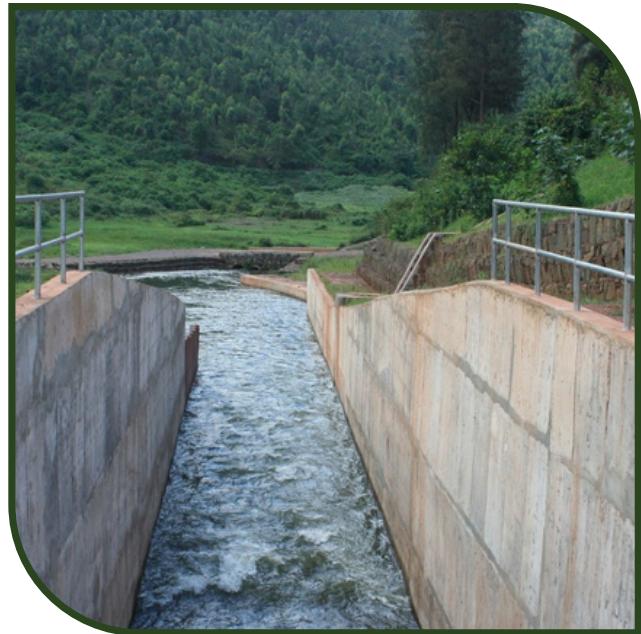
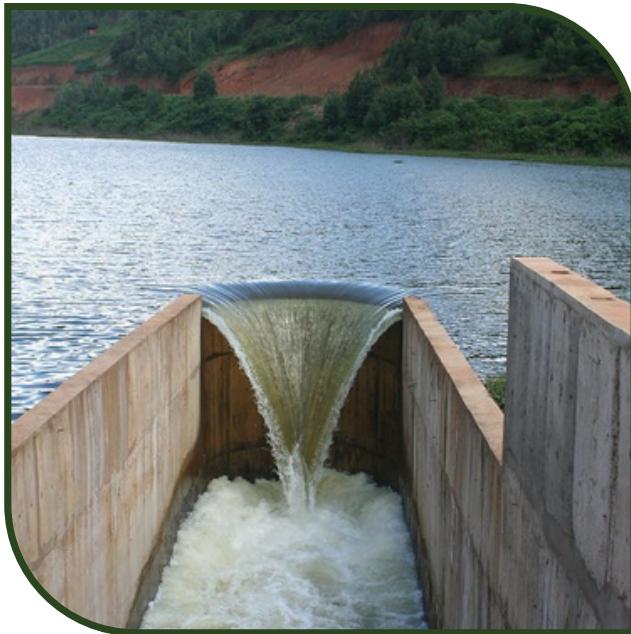


When I finally rolled into the Gicumbi side, there was no overnight stop planned. I chose to push on, riding all the way to the Gatuna-Kigali highway before returning home the same day.

After a brief pause at Light Friend Muhazi's splendid garden, I stopped for lunch at Muhazi Marina Beach. It was there that I sat down and completed the layout of the booklet you're reading now. It was an uneventful Monday, and the usual weekend buzz was noticeably absent. The space felt calm and unhurried—the lake stretching wide beneath soft light, a gentle breeze brushing its surface into ripples. Without crowds or noise, the atmosphere allowed me to organize the material that would culminate in this publication, free from distraction.

Shortly thereafter came the final coffee break of the tour, at Relax Presso Muhazi. Before crossing the finish line, I made several quick stops to check out other recreational facilities lining this stretch, including New Rwesero Beach, Vaska Campers, and Rwesero Holidays Beach. The Gicumbi slice, it turns out, is quietly holding its own.

TRACING THE OUTLET



This unforgettable tour came to a close at Muhazi Dyke, the lake's only outlet and the point where the Nyabugogo River begins its journey toward the Nyabarongo. Built to regulate water flow, prevent flooding, and support agriculture, the dyke represents a careful balance between human need and nature's rhythm. It marks where the lake finally lets go after stretching calmly across five districts.

For years, Muhazi struggled with extremes. Heavy rains sent water rushing downstream, flooding farms and settlements, while dry seasons left fish cages suspended and irrigation systems strained. The dyke transformed that reality, controlling the lake's outflow to protect communities and sustain fishing, farming, and daily life.

I exited the Muhazi Belt through this same release point—the Nyabugogo River. Coincidentally, the road back to Kigali runs alongside the river itself. I followed its course all the way to Kigali, watching the water that had accompanied me around the lake now seeing me off. It felt like a natural closing of the loop—leaving the lake by its release point and returning to Kigali guided by the same current.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This journey around Lake Muhazi was made possible through the generosity and support of several partners along the shoreline. I am grateful to Kingfisher Resort, Good Mood Beach Resort, Umuko Lodge, Vox Wagen Campsite, Ma Campagne Resort, and Falcon Golf & Country Club for supporting this tour in practical and meaningful ways.

Whether through accommodation, meals, access to boats and water sports equipment, or fuel contributions, their support allowed the journey to unfold smoothly and without interruption. Each contribution, offered in its own way, played a role in shaping the experience documented in these pages.

I also extend my appreciation to all Turning Pages partners, whose involvement continues to create a growing market for books that highlight my tours. Together, this support goes beyond logistics—it reflects a shared belief in slow travel, thoughtful exploration, and the value of stories shaped by the road.

